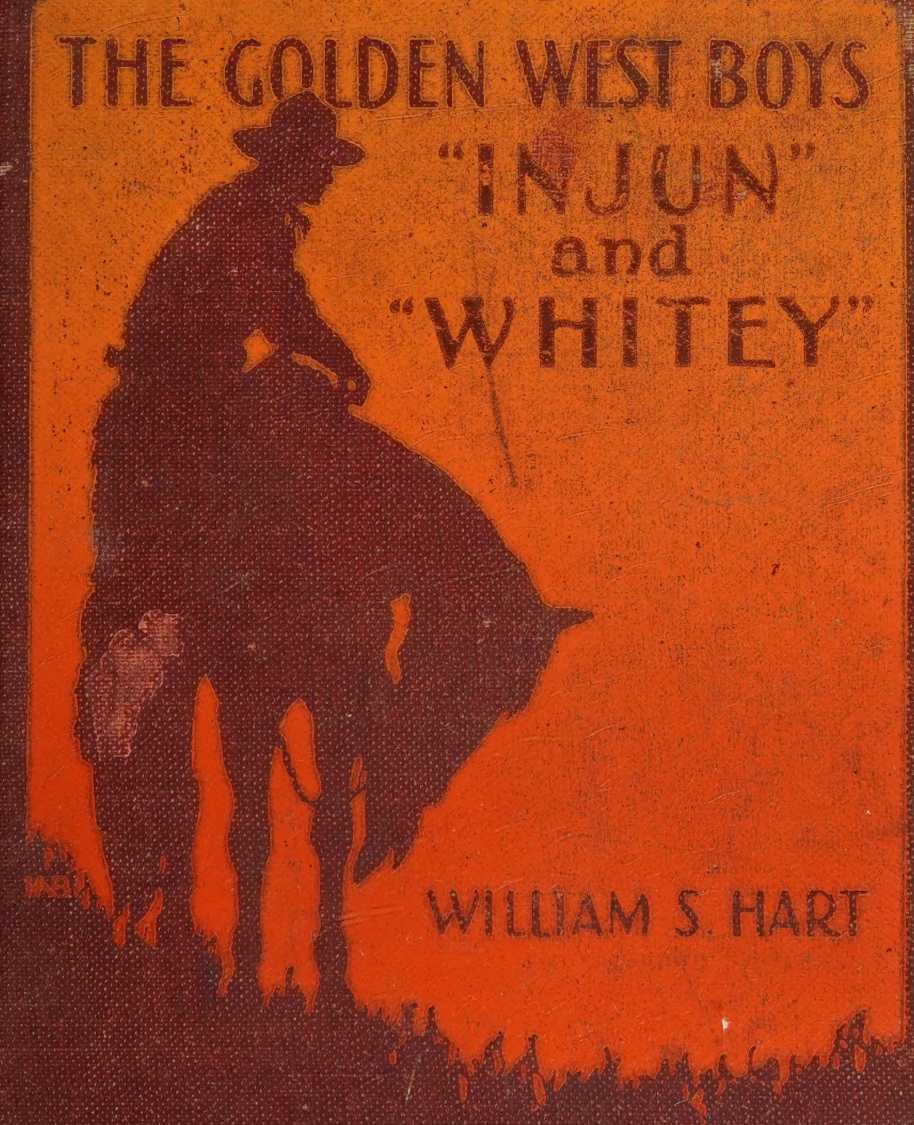
THE GOLDEN WEST BOYS

"INJUN" and "WHITEY"



WILLIAM S. HART

BOYS' GOLDEN WEST SERIES

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THE GOLDEN WEST BOYS

THE GOLDEN WEST BOYS

"INJUN" AND "WHITEY"

A Story of Adventure

BY

WILLIAM S. HART

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MORRIS H. PANCOAST

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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TO MY BOY FRIENDS

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TO MY BOY FRIENDS ALL OVER THE WORLD

The first fifteen years of my life were spent in the Dakota Territory. The great West mothered me during the shaping of my boyhood ambitions and ideals. Therefore, I know by personal experience much of the actual life of our frontier days.

Let me relate a few unusual stories of early environment which will show why a man brought up in the West never forgets its history, traditions and life.

While boys of my age in the East were playing baseball, football and the various school games, I was forced through environment to play the more primitive games of the Indian. I lived on the frontier. White settlers were scarce. Naturally, I had but a few boy companions of my own race. A boy is a boy no

matter what race or country; therefore, we played with the Indian youths.

In this way, I learned to ride Indian-style as well as with the saddle; I learned to shoot accurately with rifle or six-gun; I learned to hunt and track with the wisdom of my red friends; and I learned to play the rugged, body-building games of the native Americans, which called for the greatest endurance and best sportsmanship. In short, I was a Western boy.

For instance, we used to sail primitive Indian ice-boats on the upper Missouri river. This sport was the chief joy of my winter days. With our Indian boy friends we would construct the ice-boat in this fashion:

Taking a suitable number of barrel-staves, we lashed them together lengthwise with buck-skin thongs. Thus the staves were raised from the surface both in the front and rear, making a canoe effect. Then a soap box was placed in the middle of the craft. Next we placed a stout pole upright in the front end of the box.

To a crosspiece on the pole we lashed a blanket. We were then all ready to go.

When the winter winds hit those rude sails, we traveled so far and so fast in one direction that it would take us all day to walk back home.

During my Dakota boyhood I not only acquired the accomplishments of the West, but I met some of the most famous characters of frontier days—white and red men. In fact, my early days of intimate relationship with the Sioux Indians enabled me to learn their tribal traits and history nearly as well as I know our own. I speak the "silent tongue"—the sign language of the Sioux which, by the way, is understood by all Indian tribes.

In those days the luxuries and even many of the necessities of civilization were denied us in our frontier settlements. My mother brought four children into this world, attended by Sioux squaws because a doctor could not be procured. And, when a vicious rattler nearly ended my career at the age of twelve years, a squaw officiated as the doctor, the nearest physician being

engaged in punching cows at a ranch some sixty miles distant. That the Sioux squaw was a good doctor is proven by the fact that I am alive today.

I relate these incidents merely to acquaint the public with the West as I knew it.

When Western plays were first tried out on the American stage, I was an actor of considerable experience. Previous to this time in theatrical history I had played many diversified rôles, including those of Shakespeare.

As Cash Hawkins in "The Squaw Man," produced at Wallack's Theatre, New York City, in 1905, it was my good fortune to be able to give the American public a typical Western character. My success in this character opened up a subsequent line of Western rôles for me, the emphatic success of "The Squaw Man" causing the production of many Western plays. Considerable comment was caused by my repeated successes in these characters that I knew as a boy and loved so well. Many persons who were interested in my work marveled at the realism of the interpretations.

Their enthusiasm persuaded me that the entire American public loved the West and its traditions when presented with truthfulness—and the boys most of all.

Unfortunately, other sections of the United States had long been deluged with sensational "thrillers" of the West on the melodramatic stage, in dime novels and later in the early motion pictures. Many intelligent people had formed the most weird and distorted ideas of the West from the history of frontier days to the present.

In 1914 Western pictures were, to use the language of the motion-picture producers, "a drug on the market."

Now I loved the themes of these plays. It hurt me to know that what I loved was not appreciated simply because the true West was sacrificed on the altar of sensationalism. Realizing that because of my early associations of the West and my training as an actor combined, I was qualified to rectify many mistakes which were then being made in the production of Western photoplays, I decided to try my

luck. To give the American public the benefit of all I knew of the West from experience and training became my one ambition. In turn, I would enjoy the gratification of doing something that I had longed to do all my life. And, naturally, I hoped for increased fame and financial success. My continued success in Western rôles on the stage revealed to me that what the public desired most of motion pictures of the West was consistent realism. Of this fact I was so thoroughly convinced that I was ready to sacrifice my standing on the legitimate stage, purchased by long years of toil and hard knocks, to take a chance with fate.

So I declined a flattering and remunerative offer from a big theatrical firm in New York City and paid my own railroad fare to California. In May, 1914, I started my work in Western pictures as a star at the salary of $75 a week, with nó other financial interest of any nature. Such was the status of Western photoplays at that time. Nearly five years have passed since that eventful time in my career. That I have devoted this lengthy period ex-

clusively to the production of Western pictures is the best proof that the American public possesses a love for the West that will endure for all time.

"The Golden West Boys" is my answer to the thousands of letters I have received from the boys—most of them, of course, from America, but many from all points of the compass. My story in verse, "Pinto Ben," and my prose story "The Savage" have been translated and published in the Swedish language. With the war over translations in other languages are to follow.

All Hail the Boys!—I shall never "go broke" as long as I hold their esteem. My next story will continue the "Golden West" Series in which "Injun and Whitey Strike out For Themselves."

"So long, boys—take keer o' yerselves."

Faithfully yours,

W. S. H.

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THE GOLDEN WEST BOYS

CHAPTER I

NEWS FROM THE WEST

"Hooray! Hooray!" shouted Alan Sherwood,—better known as "Whitey" to the boys in school. "Ooo-lu-lulu-loo-lulu!" he called, making the sound by putting his hand over his mouth and rapidly pulling it away and putting it back. He considered this a very good imitation of an Indian war-whoop.

Mr. Sherwood, "Whitey's" father, had just finished reading aloud a letter from a firm of lawyers in Montana which stated that Uncle Robert Granville, who died some weeks before, had left a will bequeathing his large ranch and everything on it to Mr. Sherwood; and that,

as the ranch was a profitable one, it would be necessary for him to come to Montana and either carry on the business or see to its disposal.

"Hooray! Hooray!" yelled "Whitey," executing a very wild dance, and letting out a series of whoops that almost deafened the other members of the family.

"What are you 'hooraying' about?" asked Mr. Sherwood, while his wife and his two small sisters held their hands over their ears. "I hope," said Mr. Sherwood, with a quizzical smile, "it is not because your poor uncle Robert is dead?"

"Why, of course not, Father," said "Whitey," somewhat abashed; "I'm very sorry that Uncle Robert is dead—but—I'm just glad that I'm going out West and can go hunting and be a cow-boy, and maybe shoot a few grizzly bears and Indians!"

"Who told you that *you* were going?" asked his father, pretending to be very serious, but having hard work to keep back a smile.

"Well, I'd just like to see myself staying

here if we owned a ranch out West!" said "Whitey," with fine scorn. "I've heard you say, lots of times, that the West is the place for a young man!"

Whitey had just attained the age of fourteen, and Mr. Sherwood had to conceal a smile behind his hand, as he glanced at his wife, who was an interested listener.

"And what do you want to kill Indians for —they never did anything to you, did they?" asked Mr. Sherwood.

"No," said Whitey, hesitating about making such an admission, "I don't know as they ever did anything to me—but everybody kills 'em, don't they? In all the Western books I read, people always kill 'em—'wipe 'em out' is what the scouts call it in the books—make 'em 'bite the dust!' I thought that was the proper thing to do," he said, in defense of his position.

"Well," said Mr. Sherwood, "I think I'd give the matter a little consideration before I started the slaughter. It isn't open season for Indians just now, and besides, if the Indians should happen to hear that you were coming,

they might all leave, while there is yet time to escape the White Avenger! And as for the grizzlies—did you ever see a grizzly bear, Son?"

"Sure," said Whitey, disdainfully, "up at the Bronx Zoo. He was a terribly moth-eaten looking affair—no life in him at all! He just went sniffing around and all he cared about was to eat peanuts. And when the keeper went into the cage, he ran like he was scared to death!"

"Maybe he'd act a little different if he were in his native Rockies, and you might not have any peanuts with you," said Mr. Sherwood, shaking his head. "Would you believe it, if I told you that a grizzly can run almost as fast as the fastest horse? And in the brush and over the rough ground, a great deal faster?"

"I'd believe it, if you say so; but it doesn't seem possible," said Whitey, doubtfully. "If he can run that fast, it would make him mighty hard to catch, wouldn't it?" he asked, after some thought.

"It would," laughed Mr. Sherwood, "if he always ran the other way—but he doesn't! Sometimes it's harder to *let him go* than it is to catch him! Sometimes he runs after *you* —and then you'd have to 'go some'—as you say."

"If he ever came at me," said Whitey, belligerently, "I'd put a bullet in his heart!"

"Even that doesn't always stop a grizzly, right away," said Mr. Sherwood. "They have very surprising vitality. I think that, for the time being, I'd let the Indians and grizzlies alone—let the poor things live! At any rate, you're not out West, yet, and it may be that I shall decide not to go at all—though I suppose I shall," and Mr. Sherwood proceeded to ponder over the matter. Nevertheless, it was plain to be seen that he, too, felt the call of the mountain and the prairie almost as much as did his son.

Although a prosperous merchant in New York he had spent several years of his early life in the great West; and once a man gets the lure of the wilds in his blood, he is seldom

able to shake it off altogether. But he felt that there were too many things to be considered—his business, his family and their welfare and the schooling of his children—to make a hasty decision, pack up, bag and baggage, and leave a comfortable home for a new and untried one.

No one, not even grown-ups, can always do just as he likes. Everybody has obligations to others; and there are many things that we all must forego to fulfill those obligations—as a matter of duty. For duty is, after all, nothing but fulfilling obligations, and the sooner a *boy* learns this, the sooner he becomes a *man!*

Alan Sherwood, although he was only fourteen years old, was getting to be a good deal of a man. The nickname "Whitey" had been given him by his companions at school on account of his light blonde hair. He had resented it, at first; but after he found out that he couldn't "lick the whole school,"—although he came pretty near doing it—he gradually became resigned to it, and answered to it readily.

Whitey was large for his age, and was far stronger than the average boy of fifteen or sixteen. This had been brought about by the fact that he had been a weakling up to the time he was seven or eight, and had been humiliated and imposed upon by the other boys until he determined to remedy his physical defects, if hard work and systematic exercise would do it.

He consulted his father and found out that the first thing for an athlete to do was to breathe properly, for "wind" is a most important thing in all contests of strength and endurance.

"No matter how fast a boy can run," said Mr. Sherwood who had been a famous college athlete in his day, "if he hasn't good wind, he won't last in a long race; and even if he is far stronger than his opponent in a boxing or a wrestling bout, he will be beaten by the boy who has good wind."

Whitey began by taking a long, deep breath, as soon as he came out of doors in the morning, and holding it while he walked ten steps; and this he repeated ten times. It made him

a little dizzy, at first, but he found that he could soon increase it to twenty and thirty times without discomfort. He was careful to make the increase very gradually, stopping the deep breathing as soon as he felt the slightest dizziness.

Then he began to take up systematic and regular running, jogging around the block at a slow pace, and slowing down to a walk as soon as he felt his heart beating fast. He soon found that he could negotiate this without breathing hard, and then he began to increase the distance. He had been assured by his father that many boys, and men, too, who *think* they are training are really hurting themselves by over-doing it, and are surprised to find that they do not get into condition, being ignorant of the fact that *moderation* is the basis of all success.

Mr. Sherwood pointed out to Whitey that shrewd baseball managers do not allow their men to exert themselves to the utmost in the early days of spring training, but compel them to "lob 'em over" until their arm-muscles be-

come flexible. And they will not allow a player to run bases at top speed for fear that he may strain a tendon in his leg and impair his speed for a large part of the playing season.

"It is a hard thing for a young and ambitious athlete to keep himself in check when he is brimming over with health and strength and enthusiasm," said Mr. Sherwood, "but it is the *real* way to train. Many a young athlete ruins his chances for future success by going at it too violently at first."

Of course, there were many other things that Mr. Sherwood showed Whitey, one of the most important being regular hours—regular hours for sleep and for play; in short, to be systematic. And another thing of great importance was cleanliness—both of mind and body—for no boy or man can, or ever did, become a really great athlete without the aid of both of these.

And as for smoking—"Well," said Mr. Sherwood, "I can't say that there is anything really wrong about a *man* smoking, but for a boy to smoke means that he is willing to

sacrifice almost everything to that. It not only is apt to stunt his growth, but *one cigarette* may destroy all the good effects of a week's training. And not only that, it affects the eye and the nerves—takes away accuracy from the eye, and makes the hand unsteady. I don't believe it pays—I don't believe there is enough fun in smoking to make up for what it costs a boy in a physical way, even if there were no other reasons."

And so Whitey really went into training without seeming to have done so—any boy can do it; he doesn't need any dumb-bells or gymnasium apparatus—and the result was, that by the time he was thirteen, he was the strongest boy in the school; and what is more important, he had learned to control himself. He wasn't nearly so anxious to fight as he had been, although, when he did get into a fight, he was able to render a good account of himself. It is always found that the boy who really *can* fight isn't nearly so quarrelsome as the one who is always ready to *start* a fight—and let some other fellow *finish* it!

Long after Whitey had gone to bed, and was dreaming of picking up a grizzly bear by the hind leg and knocking down eleven Indians with him, Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood sat debating the pros and cons of going to Montana. And it was finally decided that before moving their home to the West, Mr. Sherwood should go out to the ranch and learn what the conditions were and whether it was a suitable place to bring his family. And what is more interesting, it was finally agreed that Whitey was to go with him, although this arrangement was not made without some protest from Mrs. Sherwood, who had a mother's natural solicitude for her boy. But Mr. Sherwood said, with a smile and a shake of the head, that he was not at all fearful about Whitey—"It's the poor Indians and grizzlies I'm sorry for!"

CHAPTER II

PREPARATIONS

THE next few days were busy ones for Whitey and his friends. It was vacation time, and as soon as Whitey had the "honest-to-goodness" assurance that he was "really and truly" going out West, he lost no time in communicating the news to all the boys. He found Tom Johnson at breakfast; but after Tom had heard the news, he had no further appetite, and went with Whitey over to the home of George and Bobby Smith, and the four boys went out to talk over the matter. Whitey's equipment was a matter for much consideration.

"Gee!" said Tom, "you'll need a revolver—Colt's forty-five is what all the cowboys use—an' the sheriffs, too. An' a Winchester rifle."

"Yes," said George, "an' 'f I was you, I'd take a lot o' fishin'-tackle and rods an' reels an' things. You bet there's fish out there in Montana—I've heard the fish are so thick in some river out there that you can walk in an' ketch 'em with your hands!"

"I guess you're thinking of the Columbia River salmon—that ain't in Montana," said Whitey, who was up in geography.

"Well," said George, unconvinced, "it's right out there in the West, some place—mebbe you could tramp over there some afternoon. I know *I* would 'f *I* was out there!"

"Well, I'll tell you what I'd do," chimed in Bobby, excitedly, " 'f I was you, the first thing I got would be a big felt hat an' some cowboy clothes! If you don't they all call you a "tenderfoot," an' they'll make you do a dance by shootin' at your feet! I've seen 'em do it in the movies lots o' times." Bobby was aged six, but he had advanced ideas and experience, too. "An' you're going to want a saddle an' a lariat an' a good pair o' snow-shoes—it snows fierce out there in Montana an' Alaska an' all those

places—'t ain't safe to go any place without snow-shoes! A blizzard is liable to come up any old time!"

The wisdom of all this was readily admitted; and after a list had been carefully prepared, the four boys went to a big sporting-goods store and submitted it, and asked to see the various articles. The clerk looked the list over and got out the various things it called for, which included everything from a baseball—which Tom said "might come in handy"—to snow-shoes. Each of the boys handled and carefully inspected each article and approved it. Whitey had looked at some woodman's hatchets, but Bobby suggested that Whitey could take a tomahawk away from the first Indian he killed and thus save expense.

"How much would all that come to?" asked Whitey, a little apprehensively.

The clerk figured it up. "One hundred and sixty-eight dollars and forty cents," he said cheerfully.

A hurried audit of the finances of the party

revealed the fact that the cash capital on hand amounted to two thirty-six!

"Just send them up to the house," said Whitey, loftily, and he gave the name and the address. One of the proprietors stood near and listened smilingly to the whole transaction; and when the boys had gone, he went to the telephone.

Mr. Sherwood, in his office, picked up the receiver, and a familiar voice came over the wire: "Hello, Sherwood! This is Robertson. Your boy was just in here with some friends and bought out the store! He's evidently going out West—with a vengeance!"

"Is that so?" laughed Mr. Sherwood. "What did he buy?"

"I can tell you what he *didn't* buy easier than what he *did!* The bill amounts to one hundred and sixty-eight, forty. What do you want me to do?—he said to send the stuff up to the house!" and Robertson laughed the good-natured laugh of a man who appreciates boys.

"Great Jehosaphat!" said Mr. Sherwood; "What kind of a selection did he make?"

"Well," answered Mr. Robertson, "it isn't altogether bad, but of course, he's got a lot of things that he won't need at all. It's June, and he has selected an elegant pair of snow-shoes!"

"My, my!" exclaimed Mr. Sherwood. "Can you beat it?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Robertson, "I think I can. He had expert advice from the three youngsters who were with him and it was more or less a consultation purchase. One of the kids assured him that it was the next thing to suicide to go around Butte, Montana, without a compass! Said a man might get into Butte and wander 'round and 'round in a circle and never get anywhere, if he didn't have a compass! Ha, ha! I guess that beats the snow-shoes, doesn't it?"

"I'll have to admit that it does!" laughed Mr. Sherwood. "Any other freak stuff?"

"Well," laughed Mr. Robertson, "I wish you'd run over here and take a look at it! Or, if you say so, I'll send it all up to the house and you can return anything you don't want him to have. It is certainly surprising how much

those kids know about the West, at that. I suppose they get it from the movies—the outfit wouldn't be bad for a man, but I know you don't want that kid of yours to have some of the things. There's a Colt forty-five and a 'scalping-knife', the boys called it, a foot long, among other things."

"I'm not really surprised," laughed Mr. Sherwood. "The minute Alan heard the news about the ranch, he declared war on Indians and grizzlies! Don't bother to send the stuff up to the house—I'll bring the boy in and buy some stuff before I go. Thanks for calling me up! I need a few things, myself, but they are strictly in the line of peace."

That evening, after dinner, Mr. Sherwood said, good-naturedly, "Mr. Robertson tells me that you made a few purchases to-day, Son?"

"Yes," answered Whitey, "but they haven't come. I've been looking for them all afternoon —I guess something's the matter."

"Have you got the list of the things you ordered?" asked his father. "I'd like to look at it—maybe I can make some suggestions—

possibly you didn't get enough?" and Mr. Sherwood repressed a smile.

"Oh, yes! I guess I got about everything I wanted. Tom and George and Bobby were with me, and the things I didn't think of they did. It only came to one hundred and sixty-eight dollars, and you know I've got more than two hundred in the savings bank." And Whitey showed the list to his father.

Mr. Sherwood examined it with a good deal of interest. "Well," he said, "this shows that you have been thinking the matter over and getting prepared—which is all right. But I don't believe I'd carry all these things out there, if I were you. They can be bought there just as well, and many of them are unnecessary. It's summer now, and I don't think you'll need any snow-shoes just yet, and as for rifle and revolver, I'm not sure that I ought to buy you anything in that line until you know something more than you do about handling them. We'll see to that after we get out there."

"Do you mean to say that there are stores

—regular stores—out there in Montana?" asked Whitey, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes," smiled Mr. Sherwood, "some very fine ones—you can buy about anything there that you can here. And as for those 'cowboy clothes,' I think a couple of good suits of corduroy would be better—the big felt hat is all right—after you get used to it. I'll get you everything you need, though I'd like to have you suggest things for me to get and I'll tell you whether you should have them. It is well for a boy to study out those things for himself, and then take advice of some one who knows as to the things he really needs.

"On a man's first trip into the West, he almost always takes a lot of stuff that is of no value to him, and might better be left at home. But, there is such a thing as not taking enough, and we'll be careful to avoid that."

Then he added, "And another thing, Son—you won't find that there is as much difference between New York and Montana as you think. You mustn't get the idea that people out there are altogether savages, and that Indians and

'bad men' go around shooting up people every day. Of course, there is a little of that sort of thing, even now; but I believe there are more people murdered in New York City every year than in all the states west of the Mississippi put together. I may be wrong, but I think not."

Whitey looked much disappointed, and his father laughed as he saw his rueful face. "You'll see plenty of adventure—don't worry about that! But you'll find people a good deal the same as they are here."

"Don't the Indians put on war-paint and feathers and have a war-dance and scalp the pale-faces—and things like that?" asked Whitey, reluctant to give up all his cherished traditions.

"Well, not exactly," said Mr. Sherwood, smiling. "The sheriff won't let 'em. He just locks 'em up until they get sober, and then puts 'em to work on the rock-pile."

This seemed to take a good deal of enchantment out of things, and Mr. Sherwood added, "I am speaking, of course, of where we are going. There are many places where the In-

dians have to be watched and reckoned with; but you won't be very likely to get into those places."

Out on the front steps, later in the evening, Whitey and the boys held a consultation, and the sad news about the gun and the revolver was received with much apprehension and shaking of heads.

"Gee!" said Tom, "I'd certainly hate to be out West among those bears an' panthers an' cowboys an' Indians without a gun!"

"We'll simply *haf'* to get Whitey one—somehow!" said George who was much concerned. "'T ain't *safe* for a man out there 'thout he's heeled! Mebbe," he continued, after some thought, "if Whitey ain't goin' till next week we can manage it—*somehow!*"

Bobby, the youngest boy of the lot, was as much alarmed about Whitey's safety as anybody, but he said nothing. However, he gave the matter deep and even prayerful thought. On his knees, that night, he concluded his prayers—"And, Lord, *please* don't let Whitey

go out West without a revolver! You *know* it ain't safe! Amen!"

And that was why Bobby's father never could find that little, pearl-handled pistol that he kept in the automobile!

Many of the boys in the neighborhood dropped in, and by bedtime Whitey was the most envied as well as the most popular boy on the block. He had promised a bear or a panther-skin to every one of his pals, allowing each of them to make his own selection—some preferred bear, some panther, with a slight demand for buffalo. It was all the same to Whitey.

There were requests for souvenir Indian scalps, but Whitey was doubtful about supplying them. And they in return, had given him much sage advice as to how he should conduct himself when he came in contact with the desperate characters, both man and beast, that he must inevitably encounter in the wilds of Montana. It was unanimously agreed that a compass was necessary.

"This goin' around Butte without a compass,

is takin' a chance," said Tom, with a warning shake of his head. "'Most as bad as bein' without a gun! If a man ain't got a compass," warned Tom, for the sixth time, "an' he gets lost, he goes 'round and 'round in a circle and doesn't get anywhere!"

It was agreed that this would be very bad in Butte!

CHAPTER III

OFF FOR THE GOLDEN WEST

As the eventful day approached when Whitey and his father were to start, it seemed to Whitey as though Old Father Time had lost his habit of flying, and had subsided into a very slow walk. Whitey's entire equipment was purchased at Mr. Robertson's store where he and the boys had made their selection at first, and Tom and George and Bobby had been allowed to come along and assist in the buying and selection.

And, too, Mr. Sherwood made certain concessions. The apprehension of the boys was so great at the thought of Whitey being in the wilds of Montana without a gun, that, after some hesitation, Whitey's father allowed a Winchester .22 calibre rifle, with a safety-lock,

to be added to the equipment. It was expressly agreed, however, that the rifle must not be loaded until the boy had arrived at the ranch in Montana.

Mr. Sherwood put Whitey through a sort of drill, instructing him in the mechanical workings of the gun, and how to handle it under all circumstances—walking, running, climbing a fence or a hill or a tree, or on horse-back; and explaining that a different method must be used when a companion is with you than if you are alone. Whitey was made to understand that when not in use, the muzzle of a gun must point either straight up into the air or straight down at the ground, *and never in the direction of any other person nor in the direction of himself.* "And," said Mr. Sherwood, "if you ever aim the gun at any one, I will take it away from you and never let you have it again."

"But," said Whitey, "if the gun isn't loaded, what harm can it do?"

"That is exactly the trouble," said his father, impressively. "It is the guns that *'are not*

loaded' that kill somebody! Careless boys—and men, too—often *think* the gun isn't loaded, when it *is,* and that is the time when the damage is done! So, the only rule is, don't *ever* point a gun at any one whether it is unloaded or not!"

Whitey readily agreed to all these conditions, for he could see the wisdom of them. The corduroy suits were purchased and the wide-brimmed hat as well as two pairs of heavy shoes and a pair of water-proof boots that came high up on Whitey's legs above the knee. The compass—a small pocket one—was added to allay Tom's fear that Whitey might get lost in the wilderness of Butte! Then Mr. Sherwood added two things which the boys had not thought of—a big strong jack-knife and a camera.

"You boys will find that hunting with a camera is just about as much fun as hunting with a gun," said Mr. Sherwood. It isn't necessary to *kill* every animal you run across. It is just as interesting and far less cruel to take his picture, and the animal likes it a great

deal better—and you've got something to show afterward. And as for the jack-knife, you'll find that to be one of the most useful things you can have when you are in the wilds."

"Yes," said the excited Bobby, "an' if Whitey kills an Indian, he can take his picture first, with the camera, and scalp him afterwards with the knife!"

"You don't ever scalp an Indian—nobody does!" said Tom, reprovingly.

"Father says it ain't open season for Indians now—the sheriff won't let any one kill 'em," said Whitey, a little disgustedly. "They put 'em to work on the rock-pile if they get gay, like they used to. Besides," he added, with an air of superior wisdom, "the Indians are kind o' dyin' out, anyway—just like buffaloes—and the ones that don't die go to Carlisle College, or some place."

"Gee!" said George, "I saw the Carlisle football team play over at the Polo Grounds last fall! They didn't look as though *they* were 'dyin' out!' They 'put it all over' some

Eastern college! I wouldn't advise Whitey to try to scalp one of those fellows!"

"Of course not!" said Whitey. "They're educated and civilized—just like other folks. The kind you kill—in all the books—are the ones that get drunk on fire-water and put paint and feathers on 'emselves and go 'round murdering the white settlers and burning folks at the stake. The Carlisle boys don't do any of those things!"

"Well," said Bobby, dubiously, reluctant to give up cherished traditions, "I dunno. You can't tell—they might!"

Mr. Sherwood ended the discussion by saying that they better get home and finish packing; and the boys were much put out when Mr. Sherwood had the big package sent to his house. It would have looked so much more like business if they could have carried the gun through the streets!

It seemed to Whitey that the next morning would never come, but it did, finally, and there was a large delegation at the Pennsylvania Station to say good-by. While the farewells were

being said, Bobby took Whitey a little aside and with much secrecy slipped the little pearl-handled .22 revolver into his hand and Whitey hastily transferred it to his hip-pocket.

"I got it out of our car!" Bobby whispered. "Mother was always afraid of it an' tried to make Daddy get rid of it—so I just took it! You oughta have it on the train—you know, for train-robbers, or somethin'! Jack Harkaway says 'a man oughta go heeled!' Mebbe," he added, a little apprehensively, "it 'd be jes' as well not to say anythin' about it—till you get out there."

"Is she loaded?" asked Whitey, in an awed whisper.

"Sure!" said Bobby.

"I guess, mebbe, I better unload her," said Whitey, and he did.

Whitey thanked his loyal little pal, and agreed that the matter should be kept entirely secret. And it must be confessed that Whitey felt very much safer—now that he was "heeled," though it made sitting down awkward and slightly uncomfortable.

Finally—it seemed an hour—the train pulled out, and, after kissing his mother and sisters many times, and amid a hurrah from the boys and a great waving of hands by everybody, Whitey was on his way into the Boundless West.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE WAY

The train carrying Whitey and his father sped across the continent at an average speed of perhaps fifty miles an hour, but it seemed to Whitey that it crawled along at a snail's pace after it had crossed the Mississippi. The first day, and most of the second, were novelties; new scenes presented themselves continually and Whitey kept his face glued to the window. But after that the monotony of the thing became tiresome even to so wide-awake a boy as Whitey.

Of course, as they came into the great prairies and away from "civilization," the chance of encountering train-robbers lent an added zest to things; but as time went on and

no train robbers appeared, Whitey gradually came to the conclusion that the train-robbing business was not all it had been cracked up to be, and that maybe the Daltons and the James Boys and the rest of the bandits had retired. Which, perhaps, was fortunate for them, as it will be remembered that Whitey had the pearl-handled .22 in his hip-pocket! He should worry about train-robbers!

Whitey was completely staggered at the size of his own country. He had no idea it was so large; distances, on the map, had seemed insignificant, but when traveled, became prodigious. And long before he got to his destination Whitey had come to the conclusion that this is the greatest country on earth—as indeed it is!

Mr. Sherwood told him the story of the foreigner who started from New York for San Francisco. When the train got to Chicago, the foreigner asked of the porter, "Aren't we there yet?"

"Nossah," said the porter, "not yet!"

Every morning, for three mornings, he asked

the same question, and received the same answer.

When they finally got to San Francisco, after about five days, the foreigner said, "They make an awful fuss about Columbus having discovered America—I don't see how he could have missed it!"

In order to get to the ranch, it had been necessary to leave the main line at a junction, and take a branch road up into the northern part of Montana. Traveling in this train was slightly different from what they had enjoyed in the luxurious Pullman, but Whitey felt that they were now near their journey's end, and he didn't mind the inconvenience of the combination baggage and passenger coach which was the only one on the "train."

Whitey and his father alighted on a small platform, in the early hours of the morning, and the prospect seemed dismal enough. There were only a few people in sight, and it was cold and raw. Even in summer, at a high altitude, such as in the foot-hills of the Rockies, the early morning is cold.

As they looked about them, a tall, and very sunbrowned man approached and said, "I reckon you must be Mr. Sherwood?" and on being assured that such was the case, the tall man introduced himself: "I'm Bill Jordan, the foreman of the Granville ranch. Your telegram was a mite delayed, but I managed to get here with a wagon to meet the train. You an' this youngster has a pretty long drive ahead, an' I'd suggest yo' all better get a hot cup o' coffee an' some eggs over to the shack 'cross the road before yo' all starts." This was most agreeable to both Whitey and his father, and they proceeded to the shack for breakfast.

It must be acknowledged that what they called "breakfast," was not much like what Whitey used to get at home. The room was low and dingy, and the dishes were thick and cracked, and a big man who acted as waiter, seemed to "deal" the plates from his arm. But "hunger is the best sauce," and Whitey managed to consume everything that was set before him, while his father and Jordan talked about the ranch.

Whitey liked the big man the moment he saw him. He had a firm and rather cold face, but a very kindly one when he smiled. His manner toward every one was reserved. It was evident that the other men all deferred to him. He did as little talking as possible, and his eyes seemed to be taking in everything. He always thought for some time before he expressed an opinion; but when he did venture one, it carried conviction with it. And what meant more than anything else to Whitey, was the fact that he took a good deal of notice of him, asking him one or two questions about New York, and telling Whitey that there were lots of horses on the ranch for him to ride.

When they came out of the shack, Whitey got his first look at an Indian, except those that he had seen in the Wild West shows. His shoulders were covered with a very dirty blanket, his trousers were much too long and were crumpled about his ankles and under his bare feet at the heels. Altogether, he was not an impressive figure. He stood near the wagon while their baggage was being loaded into it,

and watching his opportunity, approached Mr. Sherwood. But whatever the Indian intended to do was nipped in the bud, for Bill Jordan came back a little unexpectedly. "Beat it!" said Jordan, and the Indian ducked away hastily, just in time to escape most of the kick that Jordan aimed at him.

This was most astonishing to Whitey. The Indian did not conduct himself in the way that might be expected from the books that Whitey had read, and as "the proud Red Man of lofty mien and bearing," this Indian was a most dismal failure. According to all the authorities, he should have said to Jordan, drawing himself to his full height, "Dog of a Paleface, an insult to Rain-in-the-Neck can be wiped out only in blood! Let the White Man tremble before the vengeance of the Chief of The Wallawalloos!"

But nothing like that happened, at all. No full height; no dignity of folded arms and proud and awful threat of terrible vengeance. The Indian just "beat it!" And half way

across the platform, he stopped and scratched himself. It was all wrong! All wrong!

In a few moments, everything was in readiness and they entered the wagon, Jordan taking Whitey on the seat with him. They sped over the ground at a fast and steady gait that put the miles behind surprisingly. And Whitey had many questions to ask about the various interesting things they saw, which Jordan answered cheerfully.

Whitey could not get the Indian out of his mind. "Are all the Indians out here like that one?" he asked, after a while.

"Well, no," said Jordan, "not all of 'em. That feller evidently don't b'long up here; he's prob'ly from the Southwest an' ain't nuthin' but a sort of a hobo. He's jest a sample of the kind that hangs 'round towns. An Indian h'aint no business in a town—he belongs in the open. He h'aint no more business bein' in a town ner an eagle has bein' in a cage—both on 'em is plumb ruint by it. Now, the's some Indians up North fu'ther," Jordan went on, after a pause, "that's quite consider'ble men—

'twouldn't be safe exac'ly, to kick none of 'em, 'less you wanted a fight. But they keeps to theirselves—'way from town." Whitey's fallen hopes in the noble Red Man revived a little at this.

"Do those fellows give you any trouble now?" asked Mr. Sherwood. "I mean the Indians that gave Mr. Granville so much trouble some years ago."

"Not lately," said Jordan, and his grim face set hard. "We give 'em quite consider'ble of a lesson, one time. They was a bunch o' Dakotas wanderin' 'round, an' they sure played hob with the cattle, fer a spell. The' was some Greasers among 'em, too; but we give a few neck-tie parties an' they kind o' got discouraged."

"What is a neck-tie party, Mr. Jordan?" asked Whitey.

"Well," said Jordan, smiling, "the way o' playin' the game is like this: you take a man—gener'ly a Greaser—an' tie his hands behind him an' set him onto a horse. Then you make a slip-knot in a rope, or a lariat, an' you put it

'round the Greaser's neck an' throw the other end over the limb of a tree, an' two or three o' the boys takes a holt of it. Then, if somebody happens to hit the horse a slap—well, most gener'ly the neck-tie fits sort o' snug!"

"Why, that's hanging a man!" exclaimed Whitey, all excitement.

"Some calls it that," said Jordan, dryly. "I guess it 'mounts to 'bout the same thing—fer the man! But, y' see, this way, it's gener'ly a kind of a accident—somebody jes' happens to slap the horse, or mebbe the horse is res'less an' moves hisself. Then th' ain't nobody to blame!"

"Gee!" said Whitey, "I'd like to see one of those parties!"

"Well, I dunno," said Jordan, soberly, "they ain't altogether such all-fired pleasant an' sociable affairs as y' might think. I hope I've seen the last one—in these parts." And Jordan didn't speak again for some time.

Whitey figured that, after all, maybe all the Indians wouldn't stay tame and dispirited, and that maybe there would be "something doing," before the summer was over.

CHAPTER V

INJUN

It was some twenty-two miles out to the ranch, but the wagon rolled over the prairie at a fast clip, and well inside of two hours they were inside the boundary of the ranch, and saw, here and there, herds of cattle grazing. Jordan called their attention to both the boundary and the cattle, and Whitey felt a sense of elation when he thought that all of this belonged to his father. Also, he felt that, for once, he had a yard big enough for him to play in without feeling crowded.

In the distance, loomed the mountains, and Whitey promised himself that he would explore them some afternoon—they didn't look very far off. But when he spoke of it, Jordan laughed and said, "When you pick out the day

you're goin', it'll be jest as well to start kind o' early—them mountains is more 'n fifty miles away."

Mr. Sherwood explained to Whitey that the apparent nearness of the mountains was on account of the clear and rarefied air. But to tell the truth, Whitey was frankly incredulous; he had a good pair of eyes, and if he could believe them at all, those mountains were certainly not fifty miles away! He made up his mind that he would test it, sometime, and he did. He came to the conclusion that instead of being fifty miles away, the mountains were at least five times that distance!

As the wagon neared the ranch house, they came upon a strange figure on a small, but very wiry pinto, moving almost directly across their trail. It was an Indian boy, apparently about the same age as Whitey, and picturesquely clad in a "hickory shirt," open at the neck and leaving a good part of his breast exposed, "buck-skin" trousers, and rudely made moccasins. A bow and a quiver containing a number of arrows were slung over his shoul-

der. The boy had neither saddle nor bridle, and seemed to be a part of his horse, guiding and controlling him solely by the pressure of his knees.

"Here's a card!" said Jordan, to Mr. Sherwood and Whitey. "Just look this bird over for a minute. He's a queer duck!" Then raising his voice, he shouted, "Hello, 'Injun!'"

The boy stopped the pinto suddenly, without any perceptible movement, and raised his hand in salutation, and waited for the wagon to come up.

As they ranged alongside of him, Jordan pulled up the horses: "'Injun,'" said Jordan, "this here is the new Boss," pointing to Mr. Sherwood. "An' this here is his boy," and Jordan indicated Whitey. "You come over to the ranch-house to-morrow; I've got somethin' fer you to do."

The boy looked calmly at them, but gave no sign that he understood. His face was most intelligent and not at all unpleasant, though as far as any change of expression is concerned, it might have been carved out of stone. His

eyes, however, were keen and restive, and he looked from one to another of the party in a shrewd, appraising way. He seemed slight, compared to Whitey, even a little scrawny, with very thin arms and legs; but as keen an observer of physical condition as Whitey had become by this time was not to be deceived thereby. A steel wire is thin and attenuated, but it is very strong; and to Whitey's practiced eye those arms and legs were simply bundles of wire.

"Well," said Jordan, after he had allowed the boys to size each other up for a time, "I guess that'll be about all, 'Injun.' So long!" and Jordan clucked to the horses.

The Indian boy raised his hand in a peculiar sort of salute as he turned his horse slightly and galloped away. Whitey watched him with admiration on every line of his face as far as he could distinguish his movements; and Jordan watched Whitey, smiling.

"Who is he?" asked Whitey, at last, turning to Jordan, and Mr. Sherwood also looked an inquiry.

"He's some kid!" laughed Jordan. "He don't belong to nobody, an' he don't live nowhere! Wherever he builds his camp-fire is home! He's took care of hisself ever sence he was big 'nuff to kick a duck in the ankle, an' he don't ask no odds o' nobody! Him an' that pinto is jes' one—they're part of each other. That there hoss knows what thet kid is *thinkin'* 'bout! You talk 'bout yer Centaurs, er whatever they was, they didn't have nuthin' on that pair!"

"Did he understand what you said to him?" asked Whitey. "He didn't seem to."

Jordan laughed: "Oh, he understood, all right! He'll be there the first thing in the mornin', with bells on!" Jordan looked smilingly at Whitey for a moment, and then added, "I kind o' figured him an' you'd sort o' team up, mebbe?"

Whitey was plainly pleased, and he looked at his father inquiringly. "If you are asking my permission, Son," said Mr. Sherwood, "I have no hesitation in granting it. No doubt this Indian boy will teach you a lot of useful things;

and perhaps you can teach him something, too." Then turning to Jordan, Mr. Sherwood said, "I suppose the boy is all right, isn't he? By that I mean, he doesn't take too many chances and get into trouble?"

"I guess he takes chances a-plenty," said Jordan, slowly, "but what boy won't—providin' he's a reg'lar boy? Er a man either? Y' can't keep a squirrel on the ground, as the sayin' is. But I'll take a ticket on that 'Injun' to git out 'n any fix he gits into. He's a pretty wise fish, that kid," said Jordan; and then looking at Whitey, he added, "An' this here youngster don't look like no mollycoddle, neither. Long as they don't set out t' deevastate the grizzly crop an' they let painters alone, I don't reckon nuthin' 's goin' to muss 'em up much. Let 'em go to it!"

This seemed to settle it, much to Whitey's relief; and Jordan did not speak again until they drove into the ranch yard.

CHAPTER VI

BILL JORDAN

The ranch-house itself was a long, low building, with broad porches on two sides of it built on the Arizona style; and nearby were several other out-buildings and two or three large corrals. Some of the ranch-hands lounged about the yard, and took charge of the horses and wagon and carried the luggage into the house. The rooms were large and airy, with many windows; and the coolness was a relief after the long ride in the blazing sun.

After a good dinner, prepared by Sing Wong, the Chinese cook, Jordan showed Mr. Sherwood over the ranch, Whitey following, an interested listener and spectator of all that was said and shown. Whitey had lost no time in unpacking the trunk that contained his

rifle, and carried it with him on the tour of the ranch, handling it in a way that showed that the drill given him by his father had not been wasted.

Bill Jordan examined the rifle and pronounced it a good one. "The question is," said Bill, banteringly, "kin you hit anythin' with it? The gun 's all right, but how good kin you pint it?" and he handed the gun back to Whitey.

"Well," said Whitey, "I don't think I'm a very good shot—I've only shot a rifle a few times in a shooting-gallery—but if you'll pick out a mark, I'll see what I can do."

"All right," said Bill, "I'll do it." He took off his broad brimmed Stetson and handled and brushed it fondly. "I think a heap o' this here hat, Son, but I'm goin' to resk you havin' one chance at it, purvidin' the distance is reasonable." And Bill walked about twenty yards away and hung the hat on a post and rejoined them. Whitey prepared to aim, and Mr. Sherwood was about to interfere, but at a sign from Bill, he refrained.

"What'll you bet you hit it?" asked Jordan, banteringly—"the first time you pull the trigger, I mean?"

"I don't bet," said Whitey, "but I think I can hit it."

"I guess you're a pretty level-headed kid," said Bill, "that bettin' thing ain't much good —I wisht I never'd made no bets," he added, reminiscently. "But I don't think y' *kin* hit it —not under present circumstances, I don't. I don't think that there Stetson is in no danger whatsumever!"

Whitey grinned and took careful aim and pulled the trigger. There was only the snap of the hammer and no report. Whitey looked at the rifle and then at the grinning Bill.

"What did I tell you!" said the latter, exultantly.

Whitey examined the rifle and then announced, disgustedly, "There wasn't any cartridge in it!"

"Jesso," said Bill, opening his big hand and showing Whitey the cartridge that he had removed from the gun when he had taken it into

his hands for the ostensible purpose of examining it. "Jesso," he repeated. "I played it sort o' low-down on yo' so 's to show yo' somethin'. There was jest two reasons why you wasn't goin' to let fly no bullet at that hat—mebbe three."

"What were they?" asked Whitey.

"Well," said Bill, "unless you're in a big hurry, always examine your gun 'fore yo' shoot, to see that everythin' is O. K. An' another an' more important thing is, *always look where you're shootin'*. If yo'll jest cast yer eye over and beyond that hat, you'll see there's two cow-punchers a-leanin' agin that corral—not right in line—but in that direction. I admit that a cow-puncher ain't worth much," said Bill, grinning at one or two of the boys who stood near watching the performance, "but 't ain't a good thing to shoot 'em up—'specially with no twenty-two's! The third reason is that's a mighty good hat—I paid eighteen bucks fer her!"

Whitey readily admitted the first two propositions, and said he would be careful anything

like that did not occur again; but when Bill started to get his hat, Whitey said, "Just a moment, Mr. Jordan," and Bill stopped and looked at Whitey inquiringly.

"You offered to make me a bet, didn't you?" Whitey asked.

"Yes, I guess I did," said Bill, scratching his head. "What about it?"

"Well," said Whitey, "I always heard that if a fellow didn't have a chance to *win,* then he didn't have a chance to *lose.* That's so, isn't it?"

"Well, yes," admitted Bill, "I guess that's right 'nuff."

"Then," said Whitey, resolutely and with conviction, "I think I'm entitled to a real chance at that hat!"

This was a bomb-shell in Bill Jordan's camp. The cow-punchers who had gathered around heartily endorsed Whitey's argument. "The Kid's right! Come on, Bill! Be game! Give him a chance!" came from all sides, coupled with loud laughter and slaps on Bill's broad back.

Bill scratched his head and grinned in great apparent apprehension. "Looks like the majority was agin me," he said, finally, looking ruefully at the Stetson and calling to the cowpunchers at the corral to get out of the way. "An' that is a good hat, too! All right! Fire away! I throws myself on the mercy o' the co't! But say, Son, have a heart! You're shootin' at eighteen dollars wo'th o' hat!"

Whitey took careful aim and fired, and the hat flew up into the air and fell in the dust. A loud yell went up from the boys as several of them ran and picked it up and brought it to Bill, who examined the hole in it ruefully. "She's ventilated now, all right," he said, "an' I reckon it'll be some lengths o' periods 'fore I tries to put anythin' over on this here kid again! If I ever do so far fergit myself, I got this here ventilator in my skypiece to remind me!"

It was plain, however, that Bill was tickled at the way Whitey had handled the situation, and "making a hit" with Bill Jordan meant something on the Granville ranch.

CHAPTER VII

WESTERN AIR AND APPETITE

THE following morning, Whitey was up almost with the sun, but he found the ranch already astir. Mr. Sherwood was busy over the ranch accounts when Whitey went in to breakfast. It needed very little persuasion on the part of the shuffling, grinning Sing Wong to induce him to put away a bigger breakfast than he had ever had before in his life. Twenty-four hours in that mountain air would give an appetite to a mummy, and Whitey was far from being a mummy. Bill Jordan watched him stow away plate after plate of flap-jacks and honey in addition to bacon and eggs and milk, and finally said with an anxious shake of his head, that the ranch would have to do a bigger business than ever if Whitey intended to make a long visit.

"Mr. Jordan," said Whitey, pausing to get his breath, and accepting with some hesitation "just one more plate" of flap-jacks, "I don't believe I'll *ever* want to go back!"

Bill threw up his hands in a gesture of despair, and "allowed as how, if that was the case, he'd haf' to raise Sing Wong's wages, or else see about getting him an assistant!"

Whitey laughed and assured Bill that he hadn't been very hungry that morning, but when he got down to business, he'd show him how a really hungry boy *could* eat.

"It's a pity you wasn't here 'bout a year or so ago," said Bill. "We could o' made a clean-up with you!"

"How is that?" asked Whitey.

"Well," said Bill, "we had a feller here who was some strong as a table-finisher an' bone-polisher, an' we issued a challenge to eat him agin any man in the West. He et like nine starvin' Cubans, an' then some! It looked like he could spot most anybody three er four good-sized steaks an' then win pulled-up. But the' was a 'hayseed' blowed in one day an' offered

to eat him fer consider'ble change. They set down to make the terms and specifications o' the eatin' contest, an' our man says, 'What'll we begin with?' An' the other feller says, 'Well, suppose we start on hams?' 'All right,' says our champion, 'how many slices?' 'Slices!' says the other guy, contemptuous like, 'slices! I didn't say nuthin' 'bout slices! I said hams!'

"Well, sir, that settled it! Our man give this feller one look an' crawfished right there! He snuk out an' got on his pinto, an' we ain't never saw him sence. Now, if yo 'd a bin here——" and Bill shrugged his shoulders and made a deprecatory gesture that indicated that a real eater, like Whitey, never would have allowed "hams" to faze him.

"Mebbe we better issue another challenge?" added Bill, tentatively. "Yo' won't need much trainin'!"

"I'm not very fond of hams," said Whitey, "but if he'll start on steers I'll accommodate him!"

Bill let out a laugh that shook the rafters.

"I guess you'll do!" he said as he reached for his hat, and regarded the hole in it with a grin.

"Do you suppose 'Injun' will be here to-day, Mr. Jordan?" asked Whitey.

"He's bin here more'n an hour, a'ready!" said Jordan, "I seen him an' that pinto of his when I come past the corral. I meant to tell you 'bout it, but disremembered to."

"I hope he'll wait," said Whitey.

Bill laughed: "He'll wait, all right. Patience is an Injun's middle name! Time don't mean nuthin' to them."

Whitey got his rifle and started out for the corral. He found 'Injun' just where Bill had said he was, waiting patiently, and Bill Jordan made it a point to be on hand a few moments afterward. Both of the boys were diffident, although Injun did not display it.

Whitey began the conversation: "Hello, Injun," he said, in a pleasant way. Injun raised his hand in his peculiar way of salutation, but made no other acknowledgment of the greeting, but eyed Whitey's rifle interestedly.

"Want to look at it?" asked Whitey, holding it out. "It's a dandy!"

Injun took the gun and examined it carefully, and Whitey noticed that he did not violate any of the rules of handling it and he evidently knew all about the mechanism. After he had looked it over admiringly and tried the sights, he handed it back to Whitey without comment, but there was no doubt that he would have given his right leg to own it.

Whitey, in turn, examined and admired Injun's bow and arrows, and found that, although he was undoubtedly as strong as Injun, he had considerable difficulty in pulling the bow back to its fullest extent.

There is a certain knack in this which comes only from long practice; just as there is in all branches of athletic sports or feats of skill; and experience is not alone the *best* teacher, but may be said to be the *only* teacher. In this particular thing, the Indian has the added incentive of necessity—the ability to shoot an arrow far and straight means his very livelihood; and the loss of an arrow is serious—

not only because he loses the animal or bird, but because it takes a long time to make a really good arrow.

A similar condition exists in many other branches of out-door craft, and the novice has great difficulty in mastering something which looks easy. The ability to ride a high-spirited horse, or to throw a lariat accurately, or to send a canoe through the water swiftly without making a ripple or any perceptible noise, or to run at high speed over the snow and through the thick woods on snowshoes without coming to grief, cannot be learned in a day or a month. In fact, some people can never learn to do these things properly. If a boy or man hasn't a good eye and steady nerves, he can never arrive at any extraordinary proficiency.

It is impossible for two red-blooded boys to be together any length of time without engaging in some kind of a contest; and the examinations of the rifle and the bow and arrows made a very good basis for it, and Jordan acted the part of promoter.

"Let's see who is the best shot," he suggested.

"Whitey—(Jordan had by this time learned what he termed Alan's "handle" or "monicker"), you use the gun an' let Injun use the bow and arrows and shoot at a mark—say 'bout twenty paces off. What d' y' say?"

"Sure," said Whitey, agreeing readily. "We'll shoot at your hat!"

"Not by no means, y' won't!" said Jordan, grinning. "I got some respect fer that old hat yet! 'T was a new one, yestiddy—till yo' made an old one out'n it!" he added, reproachfully.

Jordan took a pine board, marked a circle and bull's eye on it, and fixed it against a post of the corral about twenty paces away. He elected that Whitey shoot first, and the latter took careful aim and fired. The splinters flew from the board, but it was found to have only chipped the edge, and was not within the circle; but it was not such a bad shot, as the board was hardly more than a foot wide.

Injun fitted an arrow to the bow and drew the string back to his ear. The arrow went straight to the mark and sunk itself in the pine

board in the bull's eye. Injun had not used one of his sharp-pointed hunting arrows, or it would probably have gone clear through the board. Whitey was most enthusiastic in his admiration for such skill as this, and, too, it stirred in him a determination to emulate it. But try as he would, he could not send the bullets from his rifle with anything near the accuracy that Injun shot his arrows.

Whitey tried the bow and arrows several times, but succeeded in hitting the board only once, and with nothing like the force that Injun had communicated to the shaft. He urged Injun to try the rifle—he didn't have to urge very hard, as the latter was dying to try it. And while he obtained somewhat better results from it than Whitey got from the bow, he proved that as far as getting his dinner in the woods or mountains is concerned, he might better stick to his bow. However, there was no doubt that the first competition between the boys had resulted in Injun's favor.

As Injun handed the rifle back to Whitey, he looked at Jordan, and for the first time spoke.

"Him shoot!" he said.

"Who—me?" said Jordan, "I guess I'm a leetle mite out o' practice. Tell yo' what I'll do, though, Whitey—yo' done put my lid on the bum, an' I'll shoot if you'll let me have a crack at that new hat o' your'n! Come on now, are yo' game?" said Jordan, taking his big Colt forty-five from his holster.

"Turn about is fair play," said Whitey, "so here goes!" and he fastened his hat on the board, making a fair mark.

Jordan laughed, and turning, he emptied his revolver in the direction of the hat in less time than it takes to tell it. "By Crackey!" exclaimed Jordan, in a disappointed way, "I don't believe I hit thet air old sky-piece, after all! I'm shore gettin' outer practice!"

The boys ran to the hat, and found that it was untouched. BUT—Jordan had put a ring of bullets all around it, none of them being more than half an inch from the brim!

"I guess you don't need much practice!" gasped Whitey, as he came back with the hat. "I wouldn't have thought it possible for any

one to shoot like that!" he added, in undisguised admiration.

"Well," said Jordan, slowly, "mebbe if I'd bin a leetle more careful an' took more time, I *might* have hit it. I reckon, now, I've done throwed away my chance to get even with yo'!"

"You'll never get another chance at *my* hat—not unless you let me put it up a mile away—and even then I'd be afraid you'd hit it!"

"I reckon the hat's some safe if thet's the case," said Bill.

CHAPTER VIII

WHITEY LEARNS TO RIDE

"Look here, Whitey," said Bill Jordan, one afternoon, "kin yo' ride a hoss? If yo' an' this here Injun is goin' in cahoots, yo' gotta ride some!"

"I'm not what any one would call a good rider," said Whitey, "but I guess I can manage to stay on. I used to ride the horses down at Coney Island, and once or twice when we were in the country; but these horses are different. They don't wait till you get your seat before they whirl 'round and beat it!"

"Some of 'em is a mite hasty," admitted Bill, "but we got one or two nice, ol' hobby-hosses in the corral thet'll be 'bout yo'r size. Buck," he shouted to one of the cow-punchers nearby, "go bring thet ol' sorrel out'n the corral—thet is, pervidin' he's able to walk. Yo'll

probably find him leanin' up agin the fence to keep from fallin' down. This here Whitey person is goin' to set on him fer a spell an' take a nap."

Buck took a halter and went into the corral, and soon returned leading the sorrel, which did not seem to be in any danger of falling down if he didn't have something to lean against. In fact, the sorrel was a pretty lively animal, and Whitey had his misgivings; but he knew that Bill Jordan would not allow him to mount a fractious or vicious horse, inexperienced as he was, and he made up his mind that he would "go through" with it. If he were to spend any length of time in the West, he knew that the sooner he learned to ride, the better off he would be, and the more he could enter into the work and play of the ranch—and, indeed, the very life of the West with which the horse is so inseparably associated. Then, too, he admired and marveled at the way Injun rode his pony, and the spirit of rivalry within him made him determine that he would not remain outclassed, for any long

time, by a boy of his own age in any department of out-door life.

Bill watched Whitey narrowly, and it is probable that if he had seen any exhibition of "the white feather," he would have stopped the performance. For he knew that confidence is the main thing, and if the boy were timid, he might come to grief. But Whitey evidently did not have "cold feet."

"Buck, you keep the ol' rack-o'-bones from fallin' apart, an' I'll give the kid a hand," said Bill, offering to boost Whitey into the saddle.

"Let me try to mount myself," said Whitey. "I may be out on the prairie some time and it won't be convenient to come way back here to get you to boost me up."

"Correct," said Bill, tickled over the boy's refusal of his assistance. "It's always well to play a lone hand—ef yo' got the cards to do it!" And Whitey swung himself onto the horse in as near an imitation of the way of the ranchmen as he could.

Once he was mounted on the sorrel, after some elementary instructions from Bill as to

mounting and keeping his seat by the knee-grip, Buck, who had stood at the horse's head, released his hold, and the sorrel started off at a lively clip; and if Whitey had not remembered his instructions and been prepared for just this thing, he would have been unseated. As it was, he had a narrow escape, but managed to stick on, to the great delight of Bill—and, incidentally, of himself! Every added minute on the horse gave added confidence to Whitey, and as he began to get the swing and rhythm of it, he already felt that exhilaration which comes from riding. Injun, of course, accompanied him, and the two boys rode around the big corral to which his first essay was confined.

Bill Jordan watched Whitey with considerable satisfaction; he had taken a great interest in the boy because he recognized in him many of the sterling qualities that go to make a man. He had not selected a "rocking-horse" for his first ride largely to see if Whitey would tackle what seemed to be a difficult undertaking without fear; and the manner in which the boy had "gone to it" pleased him

immensely. He knew that there was really very little actual danger, for the sorrel was steady and "honest" and had no vicious traits, and there is such a thing as too much "baby-ing."

Whitey was strong and confident, and there are worse things than a fall from a horse. Jordan knew, also, that if a rider starts on an "easy-chair" sort of a horse, he will learn many things which he must eventually un-learn. At any rate, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the manner in which Whitey performed justified his judgment. It would not do, of course, to start *every* boy in this way; but Whitey was an unusual boy, and Bill felt that he took very few chances.

In the next few days Whitey picked up a surprising lot of horsemanship and though he had a fall or two, when he attempted to do some of the "fancy stuff" that Injun and the cow-punchers showed him, he had no broken bones, and he felt that he was competent to ride almost anywhere and keep up the pace. Confidence, after all, is the main thing, and

this Whitey had in large measure. And, what counts for much also, *he was willing to be shown.* He did not *"know it all."* Any boy who starts in a new game and thinks he knows it all will certainly come to grief.

The taking over of a new property like the big Bar O ranch and getting the run of things is no small job; and Mr. Sherwood was kept too busy to pay more than casual attention to Whitey. Thus the two boys were left almost entirely to themselves, although Bill Jordan kept an eye on them, as did many of the ranch-hands with whom they were favorites.

CHAPTER IX

THE BOYS SETTLE A QUESTION

Not only is it impossible for two red-blooded boys to be together for any length of time without engaging in some kind of competition, but usually that competition takes the form of seeing "who is the best man!" No boy likes to be out-done at any sport; and if he is, he usually tries to improve in that sport, or casts about to find something at which he is better than his victor. Whitey was compelled to acknowledge that Injun was the better shot—how long he would remain better, especially with the rifle, was a matter that was up to Whitey—but the strongest and fleetest boy in the big Eastern school was not going to acknowledge Injun's superiority in other branches of sport until he was obliged to do so.

As far as riding was concerned, there was no comparison at all; and again Whitey was compelled to admit inferiority. But he knew that his rival had by far the better horse, and had practically been brought up on his back; and Whitey felt that, given an equal opportunity, he, too, could ride as well as the next boy. If spending most of his waking hours in the saddle would accomplish this, he determined to put them in that way.

It must not be understood that Whitey was a "poor loser"—such was far from the truth. Defeat did not make him "sore" and engender hatred in him; it only made him try the harder. He was always the first to congratulate his successful rival, *and to make up his mind that he would strive to equal or excel his rival's performance.* In this instance, however, he realized that he was "playing Injun's own game"; and maybe, if Injun played some of Whitey's games, he would not come off any better than Whitey had at Injun's.

It was several days before the stiffness from riding began to leave Whitey's muscles and

they assumed their usual elasticity; but he had stuck to his saddle during that time, and gradually the soreness began to wear away. He also had acquired confidence and a knowledge of his horse, the sorrel, which he had named Monty, and Monty had begun to know him. This is a necessity for really finished or satisfactory riding; and, on the advice of Bill Jordan, Whitey assumed entire charge of the horse, grooming and feeding and watering him, and ingratiating himself into Monty's confidence and affection in every way that he could until he had established an understanding between them.

"Ef yo' an' that sorrel gets to be pals," said Bill, "Yo' hes gone a long ways toward bein' a rider. Team-work counts for a heap in that game!"

And so, although it would be a long time before Whitey and Monty could ever hope to rival Injun and his pinto, yet, for all practical purposes, Whitey became a fair horseman, and the pair made a good combination. He even had aspirations toward riding one of the bucking bronchos that the boys broke in the corral;

but Bill Jordan put a veto on this, and said that there would be "plenty of time for thet stuff when funeral expenses ain't so high!"

On most of his excursions out into the prairie, Injun accompanied him, and seldom did the two boys come back to the ranch without a race. At first Injun won regularly; but as Whitey learned to ride, he gradually shortened the distance by which he and Monty were the losers, until it became nip and tuck, and finally Whitey and Monty had won two heats in succession.

On the third day, as they came in neck and neck, the two boys rode so close together that they could touch each other; and before they knew it, were indulging in that most hazardous and difficult game, wrestling on horseback. Injun, who was literally part of the horse, finally succeeded in unseating Whitey, and the latter hit the ground with a thump.

Whitey picked himself up, and grinning, said, "Injun, you might throw me when we're on our horses, but you couldn't do it on the ground!"

Injun slipped from his pinto, laid aside his bow and arrows and his hunting-knife, and accepted the challenge without hesitation: "Me 'rassle," he said, and began to slip around Whitey with a gliding and panther-like motion, looking for a hold. Whitey faced him alertly, and for a moment nothing else happened. Bill Jordan and several of the boys watched the contest from the fence of the corral. Suddenly, Injun darted in with the swiftness of a rattlesnake making a strike, and secured a hold on Whitey's leg, coming within an ace of upsetting him. But Whitey was not to be upset so easily; he seized Injun's arm with one hand, and putting his forearm under Injun's chin, forced his head back; and exerting his thigh-muscles, he broke Injun's hold on his leg. Quickly shifting his hold from Injun's arm, and slipping his other arm beneath Injun's, he secured what boys call "an underhold"; and then, half turning, he threw Injun over his hip to the ground, heavily.

But Whitey came down, too, although he was on top; for Injun had locked his arms about

Whitey's neck and held on with a grip like a vise. They were locked in this way for perhaps two minutes, but Whitey knew that it was only a matter of time when he could break this hold, and he was in no hurry. At the slightest relaxation of the pressure that Injun was putting on, he could get one of his hands under Injun's arms, or he could twist out. He felt, at first contact that he was stronger than Injun and a good deal heavier, and these are two big assets in wrestling, though the smaller boy was perhaps quicker. And then, too, Whitey knew many wrestling holds, while Injun depended entirely upon his natural instincts; this, also, was greatly to Whitey's advantage.

But there was one thing Whitey had not reckoned on, and that was Injun's nature—Injun was getting angry, and Whitey could feel that his opponent was trying to strangle him, and meant to do him some injury if he could.

"What are you trying to do?" asked Whitey as Injun put on more pressure. "This isn't a fight—we're not trying to kill each other!" But

Injun made no reply but continued to rough it.

This put a new face on the matter, and Whitey quickly slid one hand beneath Injun's arm, and prying it up, he wrenched his head from Injun's strangle-hold in no very gentle manner. As he did this, Injun slid out from under him and got to his hands and knees in a sort of "dog-fall"; and this gave Whitey a chance to twist one of Injun's arms around his back and force it upward between the shoulder-blades in what is known as a "hammer-lock," and quickly turned Injun over on his back and pinned his shoulders down. Once Injun was "down" and manifestly helpless, Whitey jumped to his feet and held out his hand; but Injun rose slowly and did not take it.

"Look out fer that Injun," said one of the boys to Bill Jordan, "he's bad medicine! He'll do that kid some dirt, first thing y' know!" But the warning was unnecessary, for Bill was already on his way toward the two boys.

Quick as a flash Injun stooped and picked up his knife which he had thrown beside his bow

and arrows, and turned to Whitey; but the latter was ready and proceeded to show Injun a game that Injun knew nothing about whatever. The Indian, in the wilds, doesn't know anything about using his fists—he fights only with a weapon. Boxing is confined, almost entirely, to the Anglo-Saxon race, and when Whitey's solid fist landed on Injun's jaw with all the force that Whitey could put into a long swing, Injun was a very much astonished young man, and he went down in a heap, his arms stretched out and his eyes blinking and his mind dazed. Whitey stepped on the wrist of the hand that held the knife, and took it out of the boy's hand and threw it far from them.

Seeing this, and knowing that any real danger was over, Bill and the boys stopped.

"Might as well let 'em have it out," said Bill. "They'll have to settle who's boss, an' it may as well be now as any other time. That Whitey person ain't no slouch! Did you see the slam he handed that kid.

Injun evidently didn't think that he was licked yet, for he made one more rush, as he

struggled to his feet—and only one. For as good a boxer as Whitey, he offered too big a mark to miss; and as he came in, head down, he was met by a fair and square left-hand upper-cut on the nose; and when he straightened from this Whitey promptly knocked him down with his right.

Then he stood off, waiting for Injun to get up; but Injun was in no hurry. He looked solemnly at Bill and the boys. When he rose slowly to his feet, Whitey picked up the knife and the bow and arrows and walked up to Injun and handed them to him. Injun took them wonderingly; he couldn't understand such conduct in a victor, at all! Then Whitey held out his hand. "I'm sorry I had to hit you," he said. "But you got mad!" Injun looked at him for a long time; then he took the hand. "You boss!" he said, as he leaped upon the pinto and was gone.

Bill slapped Whitey on the back: "Son," he said, "I guess you'll do! I reckon you kin take care of yerself most any time! An' you give that Kid jes' what he deserved—a

good lickin'! An' you fought fair—like a white man!"

"An' 'f I was you," said one of the boys, "I'd keep my eye on thet coyote. He'll sneak up on ye some time an' see how far he kin run thet knife o' his'n in yer back! I wouldn't trust them birds!"

"Well," said Bill, "mebbe y' better watch him fer a spell; but I don't figger him thet way. He's a game little rooster, an' gener'ly them thet's game has got somethin' to 'em. Besides, he's different from the gener'l run o' his tribe. He done said you was boss! An' I take it, thet means he's surrendered, an' 'll walk turkey from now on. We'll see."

"What's all this about?" asked Mr. Sherwood, coming up just then. "You look a little mussed up," he added, turning to Whitey.

"Your boy jes' hed a slight argyment with the injun, an' he convinced him," said Bill. "Thet's all."

"And what was it he convinced the Indian of?" asked Mr. Sherwood, smiling.

"He convinced him of the sooperiority of the White race," said Bill. "Convinced him good an' plenty—right on the nose—an' other parts!"

CHAPTER X

A FRIEND IN NEED

The accuracy of Bill Jordan's estimate of Injun was clearly demonstrated very soon afterward. Injun did not appear at the ranch the day following his "argument" with Whitey; and it must be confessed that the latter missed him sorely. The usual sports and occupations had lost a good deal of their zest, and life wasn't quite the same to Whitey. Injun, accustomed as he was to a solitary and independent life, probably felt the separation less; but that he felt it, is certain.

For on the following day, he appeared early, and made no pretense that he had come on any other errand than to offer peace. He did not bring a peace-pipe for Whitey to smoke with him, but he brought what was equivalent to it

—a fine lariat which he presented to Whitey at the corral with no words and no ceremony, simply handing it to him and letting it go at that. Like the rest of his race, Injun was not demonstrative.

Whitey accepted the gift in the spirit in which it was given and thanked Injun for it; and at once proceeded to try it under the tutelage of his companion who already had acquired considerable skill in its use.

Bill Jordan had been near at hand when the reconciliation between the two boys had occurred, thinking that perhaps it was not best to trust the red boy too far; but the latter's manner soon convinced Bill that things were as they should be and that the lad was no "Injun-giver," and that there was no sinister motive behind his seeming generosity. Bill examined the lariat closely, and a smile came over his face as he asked: "Where'd you grab off this here rope, Injun?" Injun looked frankly at Bill and said, "Him Pedro leave him."

Bill laughed: "He shore did, Injun!" And then he explained to Whitey: "This here

Pedro person was some complicated into more kinds of evil deviltry an' wickedness, includin' cattle rustlin', than any six men oughta be. He's a half-breed Canuck, bein' called 'Pedro', 'count o' him havin' more'n ord'nary skill at playin' a card-game by thet name. He had most pressin' reasons to go away from here right sudden, an' he neglected to take some of his belongings—which he prob'ally stole in the first place. You title is good, Injun—better'n Pedro's, anyhow!"

"Where is he now?" asked Whitey.

"Anybody who will tell me that," said Bill, "will get a vote o' thanks all wrote out on paper an' tied with a pink ribbon! I'd travel some consid'able distance afoot if I figgered I c'd meet up with thet pizen hombrey. When he left, he didn't leave no forwardin' address—the' was a lot o' things comin' to him thet he wasn't partic'lar 'bout receivin'. If he's where I hope he is, an' where he oughta be, he don't need no overcoat ner blanket! I reckon this here Injun mebbe'd like to know where he is, too!" laughed Bill. "Injun had consider'ble

to do with showin' up that skunk, an' he's some sore on Injun—I'll tell yo' 'bout it sometime."

The subject of Pedro apparently was not a very pleasant one to Bill, and he changed the subject abruptly. "Lemme see what I kin do with thet rope," he said, and Whitey handed it to him, delightedly. Bill took the "rope," and proceeded to show the boys some stunts that opened Whitey's eyes, especially the fancy ones. And as he performed each one, he told the boys that "he was plumb outa practice."

"I'd like to see you when you *are* in practice!" said Whitey; "but I want to know, Mr. Jordan, if those stunts are really any good?"

"Well," said Bill, "o' course the main thing to do with a rope is to ketch somethin' with it, an' I didn't ketch nuthin' but mebbe a little applause; but yo' learn them things foolin' with the rope, an' the more yo' fool with anythin', the more yo' learn about it, and the more control yo' get over it. I wouldn't say thet the time spent in learnin' them things was *all* throwed away. Mebbe they ain't so useless as they seem." Bill smiled—that rare, quiet,

quizzical smile of his, as he asked innocently, "Was yo' thinkin' o' puttin' in the whole mornin' an' learnin' 'em?"

Whitey laughed; he had tried the lariat and he knew how difficult it is to do anything with it at all. "Not this morning!" he said. "I'm going to wait until no one is looking. I think I'll get better acquainted with my horse before I tackle a new job!"

"One thing at a time is good dope," said Bill. "Hev yo' got so yo' kin set on that ol' hobby-horse without holdin' onto his mane?"

Whitey laughed; and for an answer, he vaulted onto Monty's back, and, followed by Injun, he galloped away.

As the boys rode away from the ranch house across the prairie toward the mountains, they came upon numerous small streams, some of them so deep or so swift that they could not be readily forded. Here was a new experience—"swimming a horse" across a stream. Injun, of course, showed the way, and Whitey learned that, if the current is at all swift, you must enter the water above the

spot where you wish to land, so that you will be carried down-stream to the proper place. And it was here that Whitey had his first real adventure; though had it not been for Injun, there is no telling but the story of Whitey would have to come to an end right here.

The boys had dismounted on the bank of one of these streams, and Whitey had tied his horse in the way Injun showed him. Injun's pony did not require tieing, for the reason that no dog ever followed his master with more fidelity than did the pony follow Injun.

As Whitey ran down the steep bank onto the rocks that bordered the stream, he saw, not more than ten feet away from him, a rattlesnake sunning himself on a flat rock. If Whitey had been a Western boy, he never would have done what he did, and that was to stoop and pick up a stone and take careful aim at the snake. In fact, he took too careful aim! Rattlesnakes are born fighters, and naturally object to being hit by rocks thrown by boys or anybody else. And at exactly the same instant that White threw the stone, the rattler

jumped for him—and a rattler is a considerable jumper. The rock and the snake probably passed each other in the air!

At any rate, the rock did not hit the snake, and it seemed that the snake did not hit the boy; but for the next few seconds the air was full of snake and boy—the boy doing a dance that would put to shame any professional. Whitey hopped high and far and frequently, but he couldn't get out of reach of the snake. But a rattler must coil to strike effectively; and although this one did, very quickly, he was not quite quick enough.

Injun had come to the edge of the bank and had taken in the situation at a glance, and he acted instantly. In an incredibly short time, he had fitted an arrow to his bow, and when the snake coiled, it was the last thing that Mr. Snake ever did! Injun's arrow hit him just below his ugly, flat head, an pinned him to the ground for a moment, where he writhed and twisted for a time and then lay still. Injun paid no attention to the snake, but turned anxiously to Whitey.

"Him bite you?" he asked earnestly.

"No," answered Whitey, "guess not—I didn't feel anything. He made me hop some, though," he added, going toward the dead snake as though to examine it.

But Injun was not satisfied; he stopped Whitey and made him take off his shoes and stockings and roll up his trousers and examine his legs critically for any evidences of a bite. In the calf of Whitey's leg, there was an almost imperceptible scratch; Injun examined it, and at once applied his lips to the wound and sucked the blood from it and spat it out; and this he repeated several times, while Whitey looked on, grinning and wondering what it was all about. Then Injun took Whitey's handkerchief from about his neck and tieing it above the wound—*nearer to the heart*—he knotted it, ran a short stick through the knot, and twisted the stick until the handkerchief was very tight. This is the first thing to be done in case of snake-bite, as it prevents, in a measure, the poison from getting into the circulation.

"Gee!" said Whitey, "my leg feels numb—I guess you got that thing too tight!"

Injun shook his head and insisted that Whitey get onto his horse and ride back. Whitey agreed, though he had begun to feel a certain drowsy numbness all over him, and Injun had to help him mount.

It was plain to Injun that Whitey never would be able to stay on his horse unassisted, and he mounted behind him and held him on, calling to his own pony to follow.

In this manner the two boys came to the ranch-house, where Whitey was taken in hand by Bill and Mr. Sherwood and the usual remedies administered, one of them being to pour whiskey into the victim.

The poison of a rattlesnake has a tendency to stop the heart, and whiskey is given to stimulate it—to make it beat faster—a primitive remedy and one that doesn't always work. And then, too, it is a question in the minds of many people as to which is the worse poison, rattlesnake juice or whiskey!

It was evident that Injun was not altogether

satisfied with the treatment that his pal was getting; and he leaped upon his pinto and dashed away. After a time he returned with an old Indian Squaw, who set up her tripod of sticks and hung her kettle over a small fire and cooked some of the herbs that she had in a little bag. A couple of days later Whitey woke up and proceeded to get well—thanks to the squaw and to Injun!

And it is quite certain that he never again set out to kill a six-foot rattler with a rock! If a man hasn't a gun handy, it is just as well to give the rattler his full half of the road—or the whole of it, for that matter, if he seems to want it.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHINOOK WIND

During the days of Whitey's convalescence Injun and Bill Jordan were unremitting in their attendance upon him and in their efforts to make things pleasant. Whitey had had a very narrow escape, but thanks to the squaw and to Injun, their quick and effective methods, and to his own good constitution, it was only a few days before he felt almost entirely recovered and the ill-effects had nearly disappeared. Whitey realized that it takes some time to many to become a "real Westerner," and that there are many "dont's" as well as "do's" in the program of life in the foot-hills of the Rockies.

As Bill Jordan sat by Whitey's chair on the piazza, he told the boy many things—not as a

teacher instructing a pupil—but as stories that should suggest a course of conduct to be followed when certain exigencies presented themselves. One of the cardinal principals that Bill laid down was that a boy, or a man, must keep his eyes open at all times. Bill maintained, and it is probably true, that any boy of good, common sense is far safer on the ranch and its environs than he would be on Broadway or the streets of any big city; but he must keep his eyes open and learn to read the signs. Nature has signs that are just as plain and legible as the signs that mark the traffic and guide the citizen in his daily life. A careful person doesn't disregard these signs and rules of conduct in the city; and the careful plainsman or mountaineer should not disregard those that should guide and regulate him in the Great out-doors.

"Ever hear of a Chinook wind?" asked Bill, as he and Injun and Whitey sat on the broad piazza of the ranch house, when Whitey was able to be up. Injun said nothing, but his

face showed that he knew all about the Chinook wind.

"Well," continued Bill, addressing Whitey, "it's a warm wind thet's liable to come any time durin' the winter months; but it usually comes along 'bout February er March. The snow all melts an' the sun shines an' the grass begins to sprout an' the stock commences to feed an' wander away from the home corrals. Now this here Mister Chinook Wind'd be a wonderful thing if he was on the level—which he ain't. Not by no means! He's a shore-enough villain, an' could play the villain's part in any story an' live up to it! He come mighty near finishin' me an' some others once!" And Bill stopped and rolled a cigarette, though it was plain that the two boys were all eagerness to hear the story.

"It was like this," said Bill, blowing out a big whiff of smoke; "Old Man Holloway lived about eighty mile from Bismarck—had lived there fer ten years er more, an' should hev knowed better—an' he had some business that ought of bin did 'long in the winter; but the

winter hed bin a hard one an' he didn't hev a Chinaman's chance o' gettin' up to town. 'Long towards spring, comes Mr. Chinook Wind an' got in his fine work."

Bill paused, and Whitey asked, "What did the wind do?"

"Well," said Bill, slowly, "it's a funny thing 'bout a Chinook wind—it's fooled the people in the West since the beginnin' of time, an' 't seem 's though it's goin' right on an' fool 'em till the end o' time! Must be it's his balmy, soft-soapy ways! You couldn't never ask fer no nicer weather 'n we had fer some days, that spring, an' Old Man Holloway concluded he strike out fer Bismarck—never give the weather a thought 't all. He was so sure thet he didn't even hesitate 'bout takin' his ten-year-old boy, Jim, 'long with him; an' y' kin gamble thet if he'd sensed any danger he wouldn't of took Jim—'cause there was just two things thet Jim's father loved—and Jim was both of 'em!

"They set out with two saddle-horses and two pack-horses on the eighty-mile trip, an'

fer forty-five mile everything was fine as silk. The night camp was made, an' the coyotes sung the'r little songs, as per usual. An' next mornin', they put away a big breakfast o' beans an' bacon, and started out on the last lap o' the trip.

"Long late in th' afternoon things begun to happen. Mr. Chinook Wind he'd got tired o' bein' nice; he'd gone courtin' all over thet part o' the country, an' he'd let the sun shine on the hills, an' he'd laughed—a nice, chucklin' little laugh—with all the rivers, an' flirted with the trees an' lullabied 'most everybody to sleep. Then he got tired er got a grouch an' didn't want t' play any more! He jes' says, 'Good-by! I'm gone!' An' he let Winter take his place. An' though it lacked three hours o' sun-down, the sun hid hisself an' it got dark, an' then it got darker; an' the winter wind commenced to whistle—not a nice, clean tune of a whistle, but an ugly, threatenin' sort of a sound—like a fire-engine whistle in the night. It was pretty tol'able dark, but it was light enough fer Jim t' see thet his dad's face was

white. Old Man Holloway wasn't sayin' much, but he was doin' a heap o' thinkin'. An' pretty soon, things begun to fall through the air which was snow, but nobody ever seen snow like it before ner since. The flakes was as big as plates, an' they was fallin' so thick thet they seemed like a solid wall!"

Bill paused, reminiscently, and Whitey waited eagerly for the finish of the story. Injun sat impassive—he knew pretty well what Bill was talking about.

"Bime by, Jim thought his father's horse hed bumped into him; but when he looked up, he seen it was a strange man—it was me! An' the strange man hed five other men with him —they was outriders lookin' fer stray cattle, an' the fact thet they'd run into Jim an' his father was the only thing thet saved both the'r lives.

"By this time, the wind was blowin' great guns—y' couldn't hear yerself think—an' what with the darkness an' snow, it didn't look like much could be done." Bill paused. "A horse er a steer," he said, digressing, "never tries to

do anythin'; they jes' turn the'r head away from the wind an' drop it down an' wait fer the finish! Humans is different. God didn't give horses an' steers human intelligence, an' humans hev to use the intelligence they hev to protect 'emselves." Bill paused again, as though he disliked to say what he intended, but, after a moment, he resumed.

"It may seem mighty hard on the hosses —what happened—but it was the only thing that could be done; an' if folks 'd think it over, mebbe they'll realize thet it was the most merciful thing thet could be did fer all hands, —I means fer the hosses too. They was led into a little circle, head to tail, an' each ranch rider put his gun between his horse's eyes an' fired!"

It was very plain that Bill could not think of this act without pain, although it had been a necessary one, and the saving of human lives was made possible only by the sacrifice of the lives of the animals. It is only as a last resort, that a plainsman will ever consent to the destruction of his horse. In many great

emergencies, in the desert, the man will deny water to himself that his horse may drink; or, at least, he will divide with the animal.

At length, Bill went on: "When the hosses fell, they made a sort of rampart er buffer against the storm; an' inside this little circle, seven men an' a boy crouched fer two days, with the'r buffalo-robes drawed over 'em an' the snow peltin' and driftin' over that. Fer two days, the blizzard raged, an' the seven men an' thet boy stayed right there! Then she broke—that is, she got so people could see. An' 'bout the end o' the third day, the seven men an' the boy footed it into Bismarck—an' each one o' the seven men hed some part of his body frozen! They hed kep' the boy in the middle an' protected him!"

Bill rose from his seat and started to go toward the corral, but stopped for just another word. "I might mention," he said, as though it were a matter of little moment, "to give yo' some idea of a Dakota blizzard, thet when them seven men an' the boy limped into Bismarck at the end o' the third day, the thermometer showed *fifty-two below!*"

CHAPTER XII

MR. ROSS PAYS A CALL

THE nearest ranch to that of Mr. Sherwood was the "Cross and Circle," which lay some twelve or fifteen miles to the northwest, toward and nearer the mountains, near the left bank of Elkhorn River, the ranch-house itself being not more than about a hundred yards from the water's edge. Being nearer the mountains, the ground upon which the ranch-house stood was of rock formation, and was over-shadowed by a high cliff.

While it was a rather valuable property, it did not compare with the Bar O, either in its extent, improvements, or in its grazing facilities. It was occupied by Samuel Ross, who had obtained it from its former owner about six months before the time this story opens.

In many ways Ross had allowed the ranch to run down. The house needed repair, the out-buildings and fences were not well kept, and there was no semblance of the discipline or morale that prevailed at the Bar O. It had perhaps somewhere between five hundred and a thousand head of cattle, but they were notoriously ill-cared for and neglected.

The ranch was not noted for its hospitality —in fact, exactly the reverse was the case; and any attempt to establish anything like neighborly intercourse was frowned upon or roughly declined. The men kept to themselves in a surly, clannish way, even when excursions were made into town and "festivities" were indulged in at the saloon and dance-hall and gambling-joint.

In one way, this was not resented. It is regarded as a man's right to keep to himself. In many parts of the West, even to-day, it is not well to start an investigation into a man's family and pedigree, or where he comes from and what his business is. Young readers may not understand why this is so.

In the early days, the West was a haven or refuge for all sorts of characters who, for reasons of their own, sought to lose their identities. Some desired to escape punishments for crimes committed elsewhere; some were ne'er-do-wells or failures who desired to start life over again with a clean slate. In the vast confines of the West, this was comparatively easy. In the case of criminals, the law had difficulty in reaching into its remote corners and dragging a man back to Justice. In the case of ne'er-do-wells and failures, they could start again on an even basis with other men, unhandicapped by their previous records. Thus it can be seen that all inquiry into a man's past was resented. So general did this become, that even those who had nothing whatever to hide grew to resent questions of this nature.

And the mistake must not be made of thinking that the West was overrun with people of shady records. Nothing could be further from the fact. There never has been a higher standard of manhood established anywhere in the world than that which prevailed, and does pre-

vail, in the West. And naturally so. Nowhere were, or are, such great opportunities offered; but the taking advantage of these opportunities required not only brains, but physical fitness, courage, and a moral fiber of a high order as well. Nowhere in the world have people come to themselves—weeded out the bad, separated the wheat from the chaff, and purged themselves from uncleanness—in so short a time or in so effective a way as did the people of the West.

And another thing that the West has had to stand: any time a penny-a-liner with an inflamed imagination thought out some lurid, impossible tale of blood and thunder and crime and debauchery, he staged it in the West. It is safe to say that *not one in a hundred* of these "penny-dreadfuls" was ever written by a man who had been west of Hoboken, New Jersey! As said before, there is more gun-play in New York City in one month than there is in all the states west of the Mississippi in one year! And we'll throw in Alaska, too, for good measure! Of course, there are "skunks" in every com-

munity, but if there is one climate in the world where it is unhealthy for a "skunk" it is the climate of the West. They can't "get by" out there! Not for very long, they can't!

With this matter settled we can get back to the story.

Ross, himself, was a huge man, weighing in the neighborhood of two hundred and fifty pounds, and was of most forbidding mien. His red, bloated face was encircled by a closely cropped thatch of hair that came down within an inch or so of his eyes, and the lower part of his face was covered by a thick, rank growth of sandy whiskers. His whole person gave the impression of untidiness and neglect, and probably the impression did not belie the fact. He seemed to have a perpetual grouch, and enforced his wishes by sheer brutality. And even in the rough band about him he carried things with a high hand, and brooked no crossing of his will.

After he had taken possession of the ranch he had proceeded to carry on the business in his own way. The men about him—the ranch

hands—were a motley collection; many of them half-breeds, and all of a similar stripe to the boss. There was no attempt to conceal the frequent sprees and drunken brawls that occurred at the ranch, and there were rumors that more than one "killing" had taken place within the walls of the ranch house. This, of course, was a difficult matter to prove; and as the alleged victim had invariably been a man who was not especially an ornament to the community, no thorough investigation of these rumors had taken place.

When a scorpion kills a tarantula, nobody feels very much like punishing the scorpion—on that account, at least.

But while the outfit at the Ross ranch had, in general, a bad name, there was nothing that one could put his finger on as being contrary to law. Ross paid his obligations—possibly reluctantly and late—but he paid them; and however much suspicion of sharp practice might be attached to him, suspicions are not evidence in a court of law. And however much his neighbors may have disliked him, the dislike had

hardly gotten strong enough to warrant a visit from a Vigilance Committee.

One thing had caused considerable comment —no visitor had ever been permitted to enter the ranch-house proper. Many people had, at one time or another, come to the threshold; but that was as far as they ever got. The bulky form of Ross, or of some one equally hospitable, blocked further passage; and the conduct of any necessary business took place out in the ranch yard. While this may have caused comment and aroused curiosity, the fact remained that "every man's house is his castle," and unless he has put himself outside of the pale of the law, nobody is justified in violating it. And thus, it will be seen that Ross, mean and underhand, as he undoubtedly was, in many ways was well within his rights.

Ross made his shipments of cattle in the regular way, but over a different branch of the railroad from that used by the Bar O, and as far as any one could see these shipments were regular and not disproportionate to the amount the ranch should make under proper

handling. It is doubtful if anybody had ever kept actual tabs on these shipments; and as Ross was more than usually "reticent" about his business as well as his personal affairs, little was really known.

In view of the foregoing facts, it was somewhat surprising to see Mr. Sam Ross and two of his men ride into the Bar O ranch yard early one afternoon. They were received civilly, if not with any very great cordiality by Bill Jordan, and after he had made them known to Mr. Sherwood, Ross opened up.

"Hev yo' all been losin' stock?" he asked. Mr. Sherwood glanced at Bill, putting the matter up to him.

"Well, yes," said Bill Jordan, cautiously, answering for Sherwood, "I reckon we hev had some losses—not nuthin' very much, but some, and pretty continual. Hev you?"

"We hev," said Ross, emphatically, "an' enough to speak 'bout, too! But we can't find hide ner hair ner no trace of any rustlers, 'less'n it be them Injuns thet's down toward the Fork.

An' yet we can't find nuthin' to fix it onto 'em."

Bill pondered the matter for a time before he spoke. "Thet's 'bout the same fix we're in," he said. "We been givin' them Redskins the once-over right consider'ble frequent, but we're pretty well satisfied it ain't them. An' none o' the boys has seen any strangers hangin' 'round. But," he added, shaking his head, in a mystified way, "them steers don't evaporate! Somebody is puttin' somethin' over."

"What are y' goin' to do—let 'em get away with it, clean?" asked Ross.

"I dunno," said Bill, rolling a cigarette. "I thought I put the fear o' God into the hearts o' them rustlers some time ago, but I guess I hev bin kiddin' myself. What are *you* goin' to do?"

"It's got me guessin'," answered Ross. Then, after a moment, he said: "How's all your men? Be they all right? Never had no suspicions on none of 'em bein' in on the job?"

"The men is as straight an outfit as ever was got together!" answered Bill with a little

asperity. "This here thing of our'n ain't no inside job. How's yours—know their pedigrees an' all that?"

"Same thing with me," said Ross, "I got a lot o' crackerjacks—honest and straight as day—no chanct fer any leakage thataway. I'm inclined to put it up to them Injuns. Don't see who else kin be at the bottom of it."

Bill was silent for a time; then he said, "Well, *if 't ain't nobody else,* it *must be* them," and Bill smiled, enigmatically.

"My men says thet they's one on 'em—a boy—hangs 'round here a good deal," said Ross, tentatively.

"You needn't give him a second thought, Mr. Ross," said Sherwood, quickly, in defense of Injun. "He is nothing but a boy, and he and my son occupy themselves in a perfectly legitimate way. Besides, he has very little to do with his own people and is seldom with the rest of his tribe."

"Well," said Ross, shaking his head, "I wouldn't put anything past an Injun. He may

be givin' 'em a lot o' useful information. If he comes up my way, he'll get short shrift."

"I'll answer for him," said Whitey, butting into the conversation with indignation. "I'm with him most of the time, and he hasn't any more to do with stealing cattle than I have!"

Ross laughed. "Mebbe not, Son," he said. "Mebbe not. But I don't want him 'round my place." Ross and his two men rose. "I guess we'll be pullin' our freight," he said; "it's gittin' late. Let me know what yo' all intends to do, an' I'm with yo'. In the meantime, I'm goin' to keep my eye on them red devils—an' I advise yo' all to do the same."

When Ross and his men had ridden out of the ranch yard and were well down the road, Bill Jordan looked quizzically at Mr. Sherwood, who gave back an answering look of inquiry.

"What do yo' make o' all this?" Bill asked.

"I don't quite know," said Mr. Sherwood. "Have you got any solution? I didn't know that there was any significance in the call other than appeared on the surface—to warn us against the Indians."

"Well," said Bill, slowly, "I dunno as the' is—'cept thet ol' bird knows 't ain't them Injuns thet's gettin' away with his stock—*pervidin' anybody is gettin' away with it.*"

"Do you mean that he's lying about it?" asked Mr. Sherwood in a surprised way.

"Well," said Bill, smiling, "I dunno 's I'd want t' say jest thet, but I do say thet him an' Anannias is blood kin—proba'ly full brothers! He was boostin' the men in his outfit jes' now, wasn't he? Well, I know personal, thet the tall galoot he hed with him done time in San Quentin. He's named an' denominated as 'One-Card' Tucker an' he's one bad egg! The's some o' the rest of 'em thet wont assay up very good. Our boys wont hev nuthin' to do with 'em—the's a few Greasers an' half-breeds mixed in with 'em."

"You couldn't be mistaken about the tall man being a jail-bird, could you, Bill?" asked Mr. Sherwood. And then, smiling, he added, "How do you know—were you there with him?"

Bill laughed. "I was," he said. "I ain't

mistaken—I brung him there an' handed him over—when I was Dep'ty Shur'ff, out San Diego way. He done got a lot o' somebody else's sheep mixed up with his'n. He was one lucky guy to get off with four years in prison—'Judge Lynch' come near settin' on the case. Oh, I know *him,* all right," said Bill, "an' I reckon he must of knowed *me!* I noticed he wasn't exactly easy in his mind when he set there jes' now. An' I think I know this Ross, too."

"Humph!" said Sherwood, reflectively, "that kind of association doesn't speak very well for Mr. Ross anyway. What do you think we better do? I understand that our man Walker reports that he came across a place where a bunch of our cattle had been stampeded. He followed the trail, but lost it at the creek—couldn't pick it up anywhere. I don't suppose it could have been a grizzly?" he asked.

"Grizzly, nuthin'!" said Bill. "It had been rainin' shortly before the cattle was drove off, an' the' was no sign of a grizzly's tracks—I rode out there an' seen it myself," said Bill

with positiveness. Then he added: "But the' *was* horses' hoofs! I ain't heard of no grizzlies wearin' iron shoes—not this summer, I ain't! Besides, if they was stampeded, they'd of scattered more. Them beeves kep' together—they was drove!"

"And you think——" Mr. Sherwood paused, and Bill nodded his head:

"Jest a plain case o' rustlin'—nuthin' else to it!" and Bill spat disgustedly.

There was a silence for a moment or so while the two men pondered the matter, and Whitey waited almost breathlessly for what would follow. Here was a mystery—a vital ranch mystery—and he was in the thick of it! He had tried to imagine the situation, many times, when he had read of such things in books; and now he was face to face with it. Suddenly the thought came to him that here was something for him to solve, and he instantly determined that he would take a hand in the game—though he was wise enough (or, perhaps foolish enough) to keep this determination to himself. He knew that once he

broached the subject to his father, he would receive positive orders to keep his hands off; but, in the absence of those orders, he intended to "mix in." In that way, he was going to justify himself in his own mind!

Finally Mr. Sherwood broke the silence: "Does the creek run near Ross's ranch?" he asked.

"No," said Jordan, "it's quite a ways from his line. His ranch is way down on the Elkhorn—this is a branch thet empties into the Elkhorn a few miles below where we lost the trail. It's too deep there fer cattle to ford; besides, there wasn't no place on the opposite bank where we found they'd come out—not fer two er three mile down—where she empties into the Elkhorn. We went over the hull ground careful."

"Do you think they could have been drowned?" asked Sherwood. "If they went into the river and didn't come out, that would seem to be the only alternative," he added.

"Mebbe!" said Jordan, enigmatically. The two men rose and walked toward the corral,

much to Whitey's disgust. And though he tried to follow and hear the rest, he was not able to do so. But strong in his bosom the mystery burned, and more than ever he was determined to conduct an independent investigation, taking Injun, of course, into partnership.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LOST TRAIL

Whitey did not have long to wait for the opportunity to put the matter up to Injun, for that individual rode into the ranch yard within ten minutes after the conversation that had awakened Whitey's curiosity. It took five additional minutes for Whitey to retail to Injun what he had heard, and, as usual, Injun thought gravely over the matter before speaking. In fact, it was Whitey who again broke the silence.

"Injun," he said, "do you think you could find the place where Bill lost the trail of the cattle at the creek, and the place where it looked as though they had stampeded?"

Injun nodded confidently. It must not be imagined that because Injun seldom spoke, or because of his broken English when he did

speak, that he could not understand what was said. He could understand any words in ordinary usage, and there was very little in any conversation that "got by" him. He not only comprehended the words, but he had a remarkably well trained ear, and he could catch and distinguish sounds that would have been inaudible to most people. There were times when his dinner, or even his very life, depended on this faculty, and there is nothing like Necessity to develop the faculties.

The same Necessity that had developed Injun's hearing had also developed his sight; and although Whitey supposed that he had as good eyes as anybody, he found, after a time, that Injun could distinguish objects that were all but invisible to him. What was a mere speck in the distance to Whitey, Injun would declare to be a man on horse-back. And by the time that Whitey could recognize this to be true, Injun could tell who the man was.

It is, after all, a matter of training. Probably Whitey's eyes were just as good, in many ways, as Injun's; but they were not trained the

same way. For instance: when trailing a man or an animal, Whitey could see the broken twig or the pressed down spear of grass that marked the trail—*after Injun had pointed it out to him.* But he could not detect it if he went over the ground first. Injun had trained his eyes to observe the most minute things, for those minute things told him a story that meant a great deal to him; and often very small things made big sign-posts to guide or regulate his movements. Possibly Injun, had he seen Whitey read rapidly the page of a book, would have thought Whitey's eyes far more wonderful than his own—and that is only another kind of eye-training. Nature was Injun's book, and, perhaps, just as easy to read as Whitey's book—but it takes different eye-training.

The two boys slipped away from the ranch without attracting notice. This was not unusual, for by this time Whitey had become accustomed to riding long distances, and he and Injun were permitted to go about as they pleased. But up to the present time his wan-

derings had been confined to the ranch limits.

A mile or so from the ranch Injun broke away from the trail and struck off to the northwest toward the mountains. The branch or creek that Whitey had described lay some seven or eight miles further on, and in the general direction of Ross' ranch; and at the steady clip set by Injun, they made it without much exertion in something less than an hour. The ride was without incident until they were a mile or two from the creek, though still within the confines of the ranch, when the quick eye of Injun detected two horsemen riding in a direction that would bring them across their trail.

"Who are they?" asked Whitey, when they were a long distance away. "Can you make them out?"

"Him Bar O," said Injun confidently.

Whitey had not figured on meeting men from the ranch, who might interfere with their plans, or, at least, carry back the news that they had crossed the trail of the boys; and he suggested that they make a detour that would carry them in such a way that the trails

would not meet. The boys turned their horses at almost right angles and started toward a wooded and rocky region where they would not be so conspicuous; but if they thought to escape in that way, they soon found that they were mistaken. It was evident that the ranchmen were not to be lost or thrown off the track, and that they proposed to find out who was riding in that neighborhood. It was either a case of run for it, or stand and deliver; and after some hesitation Whitey determined that the former course, even if successful, would alarm the ranch, as the supposition would be that they were rustlers, and would invite a general pursuit. So the boys again turned their horses and continued in the general direction that they had first taken, and it was not long before the range riders came alongside of them.

"What are yo' two scalawags doin' out here?" asked Walker, who was one of the riders in that section. "Yo' liable to give us heart-disease—we was plumb shore we hed ketched a pair o' rus'lers!"

"We're just taking a ride," said Whitey, in-

nocently. "It's a fine day, isn't it?" he added.

"Yes," said Walker, dryly, "it shore is a fine day—if it don't rain. Does yo'r pa know yo' all is gallivantin' 'round out here? Where was yo' all headin' for, anyhow—yo' an' Settin' Bull, here?"

"I tell you, Mr. Walker," said Whitey, "we were just looking 'round to see what we could see."

"Oh, them kids is all right, Walker," said the other rider. "Let 'em alone. Thet there little red devil knows this here range like I know my boots. They won't git into nuthin'."

"Mebbe," said Walker, undecidedly. "Mebbe they won't—an' mebbe they will. 'Tain't none too healthy fer them 'babes in the wood' right in these parts jes' now! Not to my way o' thinkin' it ain't. But, howsumever, 'tain't really none o' my funeral. But lemme give yo' all a tip—keep away from thet Cross an' Circle outfit an' stay on the range!"

"Why?" asked Whitey, a little impatiently. "What harm will it do to go off the range?"

"Will y' listen to thet!" exclaimed Walker,

laughing. "Ain't yer own yard big enough fer yo' all to play in? Looks to me like 't might be! Anyway, yo' jes' take my tip! An' as fer yo', young Mr. Rain-in-the-Face, don't yo' let this here kid git into no mischief, er Bill Jordan'll cut off them two ears o' your'n an' sic the coyotes onto yo'!"

With this parting injunction, the two riders turned their horses and rode away; but it was plain that Walker was not altogether satisfied with the situation; and more than once he looked back at the boys as the distance between them increased.

Whitey was not the kind of a boy to be turned from his purpose by any such admonition as this. In fact, the scent of some possible danger only added zest to the matter; and the two boys rode forward toward the creek with an increased appetite for the business in hand.

Within a few moments the boys came to the edge of the branch or creek that marked the confines of the Bar O ranch. The banks were, except at intervals, steep and high—some six or eight feet above the water—and it was

manifestly improbable that the cattle had taken to the water from the top of the bank. Injun, therefore, followed the stream down; and some half-mile below where they had come upon the creek, they found a place where the bank sloped gradually down to the water's edge.

Injun dismounted and examined the ground closely, Whitey following, but not able to see anything more than that it had been somewhat trampled. Injun, however, saw a good deal more than that. He pointed out the fact that on the two outer edges there were marks of horses' hoofs; while in the middle of the trampled course leading to the river, the cloven hoofs of the cattle were visible—not plainly, but after Injun had outlined several of them with his finger, Whitey could make them out.

"Bill was right, then?" asked Whitey, excitedly; "the cattle were driven and kept close together?"

Injun nodded, and proceeded with his investigations. Leading his pinto and looking closely at the ground and the surrounding grass and bushes, he followed the trail back from the

creek. Some distance from the bank the boys came upon a place where the ground was bare and somewhat softer than that near the water, and this spot Injun examined minutely, crawling on his hands and knees and measuring the horses' hoof-prints carefully with one of his arrows. At length he rose as though apparently satisfied.

Although Walker and Bill Jordan had ridden over the ground, their horses had left no traces that confused the other marks; for by this time the ground was hard and dry, while at the time of the stampede it had been wet. Whitey looked at Injun inquiringly. "Four hoss," said Injun, holding up four fingers.

"And how many cattle?" asked Whitey, anxiously.

Injun shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. "Dunno," he said, frankly; "Mebbe 'lev'n ten."

"And could you tell the horses if you saw their hoofs again?" asked Whitey, the Sherlock Holmes instinct stirring within him.

"Tell two," said Injun, holding up two fin-

gers; and then, in response to Whitey's inquiry as to how he could do this, Injun pointed out certain slight peculiarities in the hoof-prints that were plainly discernible on a minute examination. Whitey was delighted at this exhibition, and he noted well the peculiarities for future reference.

Injun even went a little further than that. Two of the hoof-prints were very plainly marked; and taking some flat stones, he arranged them in such a manner as to cover and preserve the impressions of the hoofs in the ground and yet at the same time were not particularly noticeable.

Not satisfied with this, Injun then proceeded to search for a marked peculiarity among the cloven hoof-prints; and succeeded in finding one in which there was an unmistakable dissimularity. The right forefoot of one of the cattle showed an unusual deformity, being so split as to give the impression of toes. This print Injun covered in the same manner. Injun had never heard of the Bertillon finger-print system, but he had common sense.

The keen eye of Injun detected another thing

Having followed the trail back to the point where the animals were separated from the rest of the herd, nothing new in the way of foot-prints was found, the nature of the soil and its thick carpet of grass making any discovery difficult. In fact, most of the marks were almost obliterated.

But the keen eye of Injun detected another thing, seemingly slight, but really of the utmost importance in the last analysis. On one of the tough branches of a small, thorny bush, there hung several woolen threads of variegated colors; threads not more than an inch or two in length, that had apparently been torn from a piece of cloth by being caught by the tough thorny branch. An examination of the ground near the bush, which was fortunately soft, showed that the heel-mark of a man's boot was plainly discernible, and also the four hoof-prints of a horse. The heel of the boot had been pressed into the ground to a more than ordinary depth, and the hoof-prints of the horse were on each side of it. Injun pointed

this out to Whitey with some evidence of satisfaction, but it meant nothing to Whitey.

"What about it?" he asked; "what happened here?"

"Him loose *latigo*," said Injun. "Pull 'em tight," and Injun illustrated how a man would dig his heel into the ground as he had exerted a powerful pull at a saddle-cinch. Injun leaned back as he made the imaginary pull, and the thorny branch of the bush swept his side and caught slightly in his shirt. It was all plain to Whitey now.

"Say!" he exclaimed, in undisguised admiration, "Sherlock Holmes has nothing on you! He never doped out anything better 'n that!"

Injun looked blankly at him, never having heard of Sherlock Holmes; but Whitey's manner was unmistakably complimentary, and so Injun let it go at that. Whitey was about to take the threads from the branch, but Injun stopped him. He broke the branch that held the threads from the bush, carefully peeling the bark for several inches down the stem, and put it into his quiver. Then he marked the bush

and the spot so that he could easily recognize them again. Then the two boys mounted their horses and rode back over the trail toward the creek, which was rocky and shallow, and could be easily forded without swimming.

When the boys arrived at the creek, having retraced the trail without incident, although it was well past three o'clock in the afternoon, Whitey and Injun had no thought of abandoning their quest. After a consultation, they proceeded to cross to the other side of the creek and to examine the other bank in the hope that Injun's keen vision would be able to discern things that Bill and his men had missed. They followed the course of the stream down to where it emptied into the Elkhorn, a distance of perhaps a mile and a half; but, though Injun dismounted several times and scrutinized the ground carefully, there were no signs that cattle had landed anywhere along the route.

Whitey was puzzled. Arguing on the principle that "what goes up must come down," and "what goes in must come out, or stay there," Whitey said:

"If the cattle went into the creek, they must have come out *somewhere;* or else," he added, after a moment, "they must be in it yet."

This admitted of no discussion, and Injun did not attempt to refute it. It did not seem probable that the cattle were still in the creek, and it seemed hardly possible that the cattle could have gone into the creek, swum all the way down to the Elkhorn, and then continued down the larger stream—but there appeared to be no other alternative; and Whitey determined to investigate even such an improbable thing as that.

In one way, Whitey was in command of the expedition, and Injun readily complied with any plan of campaign that he suggested. The details of the investigation and the deductions drawn from them were in Injun's hands, and very capable hands they were, too.

Accordingly it was agreed that Injun should swim to the left bank of the Elkhorn and follow it down, while Whitey followed the right bank, keeping as nearly parallel as possible. The Elkhorn was not more than a hun-

dred yards wide, and the two boys could call to each other easily and communicate any finds that either made. This they proceeded to do.

The investigation was greatly simplified, at least on Whitey's side, by the fact that the bank of the Elkhorn offered very few possible landing-places, being high and steep, and there were few places that needed examination at all. On Injun's side, however, the ground required more careful scrutiny; but on neither side did anything develop. And before they were aware, they were almost at the Ross ranch.

The ranch lay just around a bend in the Elkhorn, on the left bank, and where the river was indented by a small bight, or pointed bay, that extended for several yards into the ranch property. The left bank of this bight was high above the water, and thickly covered by vines and shrubs that grew down to the water's edge, and many of them overhung the water, which was shallow at that point.

Once the boys were in sight of the ranch, the cautiousness of Injun manifested itself. He knew that the Ross outfit were none too par-

tial to him, and he also knew that it would be unwise, if not unsafe, for him to be found so near to it. And riding down into the water, where the high bank concealed him from view, he rode cautiously around the bend of the bayou. Whitey, on the opposite bank, watched Injun's movements closely; and finally, in response to a signal, swam his horse across and landed under the high bank near Injun, whom he found examining the narrow shore or beach of the bayou under the high bank. The surface of the ground, which was sandy and covered with pebbles, had been undoubtedly disturbed recently; but it was seemingly impossible to tell by what. There were deep marks as though heavy planks had been pushed against it, and the ground about showed the hoof-marks of horses. These also were discernible in the mud under the shallow water. On the small beach it looked as though an attempt had been made to obliterate these marks, for the sand showed evidences of having been recently turned over in places.

Dismounting from his horse, Injun pulled

aside the branches and bushes but nothing was revealed save the flat, gray face of the rock of the bank. Injun looked keenly at this for a moment; and then putting out his hand, found that it yielded to his touch! The rock wasn't rock at all! And going to one side, he found that what seemed to be rock was nothing more nor less than a heavy canvas, painted a dark gray to resemble rock, and smeared with mud and pieces of grass and leaves! So skillfully was this done, that it required close scrutiny to reveal it; and from a distance, even of ten or fifteen feet, it would never have awakened the slightest suspicion!

Lifting the edge of the canvas, Injun disclosed an opening in the face of the cliff nearly six feet high and of about the same breadth, and into this the two boys crept cautiously, leaving their horses on the narrow strip of beach near the entrance.

The interior of the cavern or tunnel was quite dark; but Whitey had been in the West long enough to learn that one of the most necessary things in a plainsman's equipment

is matches. Injun, of course, had his flint and steel and tinder, but they would have necessitated the lighting of a torch, which would have been dangerous on account of the chance of discovery. They proceeded slowly along the tunnel, Injun examining it carefully, and a few yards from the entrance they found a number of very heavy planks so fashioned that they could be linked together to form a rude raft. The logs were wet and water-soaked. And the mystery of how the cattle got out of the river was no longer a mystery!

Whitey's first idea was, that having discovered this much, and thus definitely fixing the manner and means of the disappearance of the cattle, it would be a good thing to make a get-away while there was yet time, and report their discoveries to the Bar O outfit; and it would have been well for him if he had followed this plan. But Whitey was nothing if not courageous, and he was also impelled by an intense curiosity to fathom the rest of the mystery. If he could locate and identify the lost cattle, which would be easy on account of the brand,

and possibly the one with the deformed hoof would be among them, his investigations would then be complete. But unfortunately for the success of this plan, there were certain difficulties in the way which neither Whitey nor Injun could foresee; and certain contingencies happened which had their fortunate side as well as their unfortunate.

The two horses had been left untied on the narrow strip of beach outside the tunnel entrance. Left alone, Injun's cayuse would have stood there for many hours. But Whitey's horse, Monty, was not, as yet, so well trained; and after a time began to be restless. The spot was not exactly an attractive one in which to stand for an indefinite time, and Monty finally retraced his steps around the bend and out of the bayou where there were grass and sunshine. With such an example, the pinto slowly followed; but scarcely had Monty come around the bend when a rattler that was sunning himself on the rocks sounded his warning, and Monty gave a frightened snort and proceeded to "beat it" away from there in a panic.

When a horse is badly frightened and starts to run in a panic, the first thought that comes into his head is to get home as fast as he can; and Monty proceeded to put this idea into execution. He tore along the bank, and at the proper place swam the stream, and was soon well on his way back toward the Bar O ranch

By the time Injun's horse got around the bend the rattler had disappeared, and therefore he was not thrown into any panic, as Monty had been. Monty was not in sight either; and so, although he probably wondered what had become of his pal, he climbed the bank and proceeded to graze on the sweet grass, plainly visible from the windows of the Ross ranch!

Meanwhile, the two boys went cautiously along further into the tunnel, which appeared to be of natural origin, as though a stream had eaten its way through the porous rock in search of an outlet—a sort of natural drain. The hole, originally small, had been enlarged by digging up to its present size. There was a continual rise in the floor of the tunnel as it

receded from the water, and the floor of it was wet with a very small stream trickling down toward the entrance.

The boys had proceeded perhaps a hundred feet from the entrance, when they came upon a sudden enlargement in the tunnel which took almost the form of a large room. The top or ceiling was so high as to be invisible to them, and the place itself was evidently a natural cavern. Whitey lighted a match, and its flare disclosed the fact that the chamber was some twenty-five or thirty feet across, and in it, among other things, were several large barrels and packing-cases.

As the boys started to cross the room, keeping a little to the side, the match went out and they were again enveloped in darkness so thick that they could feel it. Whitey was about to scratch another match, but he felt Injun's hand clutch his arm and draw him still further toward the side of the chamber. Whitey had heard nothing, and knew of no reason for this; but he was quite willing to be guided by Injun's superior senses.

In a few seconds, however, he heard footsteps coming toward them from the upper end of the chamber, and caught a faint glimmer of light. Injun hastily and noiselessly pulled Whitey toward one of the boxes that were scattered about that side of the chamber, and behind this the two boys crouched as the sound of the footsteps indicated that some one was coming in their direction. Whitey's heart was beating so loud that he felt sure that any one who came near him must surely hear it. A moment afterward this was probably true in Injun's case, also—and for a good reason!

Into the far end of the chamber came the light of a lantern, and as it illuminated the space about the man who carried it, Whitey could see that he was dark-haired and swarthy, though rather under-sized, but very wiry. He was clad in a multi-colored Mackinaw jacket, with the regulation cowman's trousers and boots, with his revolver in the holster at his side. The man came directly toward the boys and Whitey instinctively grasped the handle of the little pearl-handled .22 that Atherton

had given him and which he had always carried in the hip-pocket of his trousers. True, he had his rifle with him; but he felt that at close quarters the revolver would be more valuable. (Even a .22 fired at close range can be annoying; besides, he might throw it at the man and do more damage than if he shot him with it!)

The man came directly to the box behind which the two boys were hidden and it seemed as though discovery was inevitable; had he lifted the lantern high, it could not have been avoided. But he placed it onto the floor and reached down into the box and took out several objects which the boys afterward saw to be bottles of liquor of some kind. He was so close that either Injun or Whitey could have put out a hand and touched him, and they could hear his heavy breathing, for plainly he was partially drunk. Each of the boys held himself tense, and was ready for a vigorous defense, and against the knife that Injun gripped in his hand, to say nothing of the popgun that Whitey

held, the man, unprepared as he was, would probably have fared badly.

But at length, when he had taken out several bottles, he picked up the lantern from the floor and started to retrace his steps. Suddenly he stopped and came back near to the box. Setting down the bottles, he picked up one of the burned matches that Whitey had thrown on the floor of the chamber and examined it carefully. Again the boys held their breath, and Whitey upbraided himself for his carelessness. After examining the match for a moment or two, the man took up the lantern and looked about the chamber. He started as though to go out toward the entrance, but thought better of it; and after another cursory look about him, he went away as he had come. The sound of his foot-falls became fainter and fainter; the light from the lantern grew dimmer and dimmer; and at last, the foot-falls died away entirely, and complete darkness enveloped them again. For a moment they crouched in silence; then Whitey felt Injun's hand grasp his arm, and heard Injun whisper into his ear:

"Him Pedro!" he said.

CHAPTER XIV

CROWLEY

In the living room of the Ross ranch were congregated almost the entire outfit. Around the centre-table a game of cards was in progress, and the fortunes of the game had reduced the number engaged in it to four. Some six or seven of the other men either looked on or were sprawled about the place in various stages of intoxication; and the number of empty bottles that littered the place gave evidence that it had been quite a long session.

Ross was at the table, and the big stack of chips in front of him indicated that he was the big winner. His shirt was open half way down to his waist and his broad, hairy chest was exposed. His sleeves were rolled up to his elbows, and if anything, his hair and beard

were more unkempt than usual, which is saying a good deal. Altogether, with his bloated face and bleary eyes, he did not make a very pleasant picture.

Crowley, his foreman, the tall man whom Jordan had recognized as the "jail-bird" that he had delivered at San Quentin, sat opposite to Ross, and he, too, had considerable money in front of him. The other two men in the game were about "down to the cloth," and were just "hanging on the ragged edge of nothing." As Pedro entered the room with the bottles, Crowley raked in a sizable pot, getting a call from one of the losers.

"Jes' like takin' candy from children," sneered Crowley, as he looked at the two contemptuously. "Yo' pikers is 'bout six ounces lighter'n a straw hat! Where 'd yo' all learn this game, anyway?"

"I guess the school I learnt at," said one of the men, significantly, "was some short o' knowin' some o' the sleight-o-hand work I done seen yo' pull! Dealin' seconds wasn't on the bill-o'-fare!"

For an answer, Crowley grabbed a bottle and was about to caress the man with it when Ross reached over and seized his arm in a powerful grip.

"Cut it out!" shouted Ross; "I'm short-handed now, an' besides I don't want to hev to explain no more disappearances!"

"Let the big stiff throw it, Ross! I'll give him a receipt fer it—I got an ace in the hole myself this time," and he fingered the butt of his revolver.

Whether the affair would have stopped there or not is a question, had not Pedro entered with the bottles; but, at any rate, the two belligerents subsided, and confined themselves to growls and evil glances at each other. In a few moments the game seemed about to break up—and Ross had accumulated most of the money; and what he did not win fell to the lot of Crowley, the foreman. One way to run a ranch is to pay off the men and then win the money back at stud-poker!

Ross rose from the table, after he had cashed in the checks of the foreman and had pocketed

his own winnings. As he stood up, his eyes caught sight of Injun's pinto cropping the grass in the yard of the ranch near to the river bank. Ross stared intently at the horse, and several of the men followed his glance.

"What hoss is that out there? Who let him out 'n the corral? Some o' yo' rum-hounds go git him an' put him back. Don't seem to me I recconnize that skate nohow."

One of the men rose and went out to the pinto, and after some trouble succeeded in catching him. The man examined the horse, and then started toward the ranch house with him. The man's manner indicated that something was amiss, and Ross and Crowley went out to meet him.

"This here ain't none of our hoss," said the man, looking at the animal critically. "Looks to me like the one I seen that little red skunk ridin' with thet there Sherwood kid. 'Spose them young hellions bin snoopin' 'bout here?"

Ross uttered an oath, and Crowley examined the horse: "The' ain't no doubt in th' world thet's thet little red devil's hoss. But I don't

figger no cause t' git excited. He goes meanderin' 'round most any place, though I never knowed him to stick his nose in 'round here before. The' ain't no chanct of his gittin' into the ranch house—not in a thousand years; an' if he's 'round here, he's got a hell of a walk back to where he belongs! Hey! You!" he called to the men in the ranch house; and they came out slowly and indifferently; "take a look 'round an' see if yo' kin find hide er hair o' thet little red varmint. Thet's his hoss, an' he can't be far off. When yo' git him, bring him to me—I'll make a 'good Injun' out'n him!"

Several of the men went to the corral, and mounting their horses, rode around the ranch property in different directions. Ross turned to Crowley:

"You may not think there's any cause to git excited, but I do! Jes' now'd be an awkward time fer people t' come investigatin' 'round here. We got t' git them steers branded and out o' this pronto. It's got to be done to-night! Take some o' the boys an' go down an' git

busy. I'll be down in a minute. This ought 'a' bin done before!"

Ross and his foreman turned and entered the house; and the foreman, designating several of the hands to follow him, started for the stairs that led to the cave below.

CHAPTER XV

THE CAVE GIVES EVIDENCE

For several moments after Pedro had gone out of sight and hearing, the two boys remained crouched behind the box in the subterranean chamber; it had been an alarming experience and they did not recover from it at once and needed time to take a long breath and to get their disturbed senses together. The situation was far more serious for Injun than for Whitey, for there is no doubt that if Pedro had discovered their whereabouts, Injun would have stood a small chance of escaping with his life, unless the boys had taken the initiative and killed or disabled Pedro before he got a chance to wreak his vengeance on the Indian boy.

"Whew!" whispered Whitey. "That was a

narrow escape! If he'd seen us, I guess we'd have had to fight!" Injun nodded, but said nothing. He knew full well the danger he had been in.

Pedro would have killed Injun with as little compunction as he would have stepped on a spider, and with far greater satisfaction. It had been largely through Injun's efforts that Pedro had been exposed, and Pedro was not the sort of man that forgot or forgave a debt of this kind. And it is probable that Whitey would have been in a hazardous situation, too.

However, now that this immediate danger was passed, the next thing was to determine what was the best thing to be done. The more Whitey thought it over, the more determined he was to go on with the adventure; he reasoned that if the finding of the burned match had awakened Pedro's suspicions to any great extent, he would have made an immediate search. Whitey knew also that it was getting toward night, and, in all probability, the ranch hands would be moving about the yard for some time engaged on the evening chores; and that

to come from their concealment at this time and attempt to ride away would be more dangerous than to remain until after dark and get away under the cover of the darkness.

"I guess we might as well go ahead and see what there is in here," said Whitey, and Injun offered no objection. "It's more dangerous to go out now than it is to stay," added Whitey.

As long as it was best to stay in the chamber, they might as well explore it and possibly make more definite discoveries.

Accordingly, the boys came cautiously out of their concealment and by the light of an occasional match made their way further into the recesses of the cave under the ranch house. They found the chamber far more spacious than it had seemed at first, though it varied in width considerably, and there were several angles and turnings.

At one point there was a flight of wooden steps, evidently leading to the ranch house above, and Whitey knew from his observation of the exterior location, that they must have proceeded under ground for more than a hun-

dred yards. Passing the steps, their noses told them that they were near cattle, and there was also the unmistakable shuffling sound that a number of cattle make when closely confined. Cautiously they felt their way along the wall —the last match had disclosed that they were approaching a turn—and came to a place where the chamber perceptibly broadened again, and by sound and by smell the boys knew that they were close upon the cattle.

It was with a feeling of dismay that Whitey realized that he had but three matches left! And though he had not been wasteful of them, he felt that he had, perhaps, jeopardized their chances of discovery, and even of escape, by a too lavish use of them. It would have been most difficult to make their way back to the entrance. However, it was most necessary to light one here, and Whitey scratched one, taking great care to shield its flame against any draught.

"Here goes!" said Whitey. "We've got to use our match here!"

The flare of the match revealed an extensive

underground corral, fenced off with heavy timbers; and in this enclosure were some twelve or fifteen cattle. As Whitey held the match higher, Injun slipped forward and examined the beast that stood blinking at him only a few feet away.

"Look!" said Injun, as excited as he ever permitted himself to be, and Whitey peered at the steer.

The right forefoot of the animal was badly split, exactly corresponding to the peculiar hoof-print that he had discovered near the creek; and on the flank of this and other animals was the plainly distinguishable brand of the Bar O!

As the match flickered and went out, the boys heard the voices of men as though coming from a door that had been suddenly opened, and foot-steps were plainly audible coming down the stairs behind them.

"Somebody's coming!" whispered Whitey as Injun clutched his arm. They must seek a hiding place at once, for the coming of the men in

their rear cut off any retreat by way of the tunnel.

At the side of the corral was a rude platform or rick, upon which was piled a quantity of hay for the cattle, and with one accord the two boys darted toward this, but the momentary glance that they had given the spot, during the brief flicker of the match, had been insufficient for Whitey, at least, to get his bearings with accuracy; and even at the expense of the possibility of disclosing themselves, he was compelled to light another of the precious matches. The men were as yet some distance away, and around one of the turns, and he concluded that the light of the match would not be perceptible to them. It was not—neither was it perceptible to either Whitey or Injun! It was one of the sort of matches that are made to sell, not to burn; and after a brief and non-illuminating flame it went out!

"What do you think of that luck?" whispered Whitey, angrily. "There's nothing else to do but use the last one!"

There was plenty of time to light another

one, but in his excitement Whitey dropped the last match he had upon the floor, and to search for it would have been hopeless! Alone in the dark and no matches!

Injun did the best he could by grabbing Whitey's hand and leading him to the hay-rick, and into this, with as little noise as possible—it seemed to Whitey that they made a fearful racket—the two boys climbed, uncertain of their way and ignorant as to how much concealment the place really afforded. "Any port in a storm," and there was certainly a storm coming!

Scarcely had the two boys arranged themselves in the hay, Whitey taking care that he had a slight opening through which he could observe what took place in the room, when Crowley and four of the ranch hands entered. Three of the men carried lanterns, and by their dim glow Whitey could see that the chamber was of vast extent, and plainly of natural origin.

Crowley and the men lost little time in getting to work; and in a moment a fire was going

in the small furnace and the branding-irons were heating.

"Get a move on!" said Crowley, impatient at some small delay. "This business ought 'a' bin done days ago! The Boss is sore—tho' he ain't got no kick comin', really, as he's bin lushin', same as the rest of us. Them cattle ought 'a' bin branded and on their way long ago."

In a moment, the iron was hot, and three of the hands proceeded to drag one of the steers out of the corral and it was thrown to the floor. Crowley took the branding-iron, and applied it with extreme care. Although Whitey could not make out just what was done, this is what happened: The steer had been previously branded,—O. The branding-iron that Crowley used was marked I.; and when it was applied exactly over the previous brand, the result was +O. A very simple process, therefore, changed the brand of "Bar O" into "Cross and Circle."

One after another the cattle were dragged in and re-branded, until twelve in all had been

"I'll bother them But O people considerable to claim them even now," he said

"counterfeited." In the midst of this process Ross appeared, and examined critically each of the re-branded animals, and expressed satisfaction at the completeness and perfection of the job.

"It'll bother them Bar O people consider'ble to claim them steers now," he said. "But jes' the same, we better get 'em off 'long towards mornin', with the others, an' ship 'em as soon as we kin. It's takin' some risk, with them fresh brands, but I dunno 's anybody is goin' to make a holler. The main thing is to get 'em away from here. I don't jes' like thet Injun's hoss bein' out there; but I reckon 'f he's 'round, the boys'll round him up, an' no harm'll be did."

"Hain't the boys seen nuthin' of him yet?" asked Crowley.

"None of 'em 's come back," said Ross, with an oath; and it was apparent that he was not at all comfortable. All this was plainly audible to Whitey and Injun, and as may be imagined, their feelings were not very comfortable, either; but they lay perfectly still,

their nerves tense, and awaited developments.

Scarcely had Ross spoken, when some one was heard approaching through the tunnel over the same route that the boys had taken to enter the cave, and in a moment one of the ranch hands that had gone in search of Injun appeared. In answer to Ross's inquiry, he said, "I guess there was only one o' them boys, for the' was only one hoss—the Injun's, but we can't find hide ner hair o' that little red devil. Don't seem to be 'round no place, though we bin over every foot of the yard an' corrals. I jes' come through the tunnel—somebody must 'a' forgot to close the gate—an' on the way through I found these here burnt matches." And he exhibited several of the matches that Whitey had thrown away. "Don't look like the' 's the same kind we burn, an' besides, when any of us comes down here we git lanterns. What do yo' make of 'em?"

The men crowded about the fellow and looked at the match-ends. Crowley was the first to speak: "It's a cinch them wasn't throwed there by none of our boys. The' ain't

a match like them in the place—them's safety matches, an' we never had none o' them kind here!"

Ross confirmed this statement and was furious that the gate in the tunnel had been left open, but it was useless to rave about that now, and he looked searchingly around the cave. "Ef that red devil has managed to get into this place," he said, savagely, "you can lay a good bet he'll never get out!" Then turning to the men, he gave the orders: "Here, you! Never mind them steers. They're all branded anyhow. Shet that tunnel gate and block up the entrance! Then go through an' search every crack in this cave an' don't let that young skunk get away on yer life!"

The men at once began the search. Ross, himself, came directly toward the hay-rick with the evident intention of investigating it, while the other men began to look into and behind the various boxes and barrels that littered the spacious floor.

Realizing that escape was impossible, Whitey did a very brave thing; and, indeed, the

wisest thing he could have done. He knew that if both he and Injun were captured, there would be little chance to get word to the Bar O outfit, or to any other source of aid. He gathered from the talk that Ross and his men suspected the presence of but one intruder, as only Injun's horse had been found; and if one of them were found, the ranchers would probably be satisfied with that and make no further search for a second. And so, before Ross could reach the hay-rick, Whitey squirmed out to the edge of the hay, and looked into the astonished face of the rancher.

CHAPTER XVI

WHITEY IS MISSING

Dusk had begun to settle upon the Bar O ranch when the riderless Monty came into the ranch yard and trotted up to the corral gate. The absence of the boys had not been noticed, for it was no unusual thing for them to remain out even long after dark. But when Bill Jordan saw Monty come in alone, he at once sent for Mr. Sherwood, who came in haste, and the other members of the outfit, among whom were Walker and his companion, gathered about also.

"This here Monty horse just come in without your boy!" said Bill, with evident concern in his voice. "I reckon we better send out all hands an' see what's happened. Mebbee the' ain't nuthin' happened—Injun was with Whitey, but I don't like the looks o' this."

"Did any of you men see the boys?" asked Mr. Sherwood, anxiously.

"Me an' Hartley seen 'em," said Walker. "They was way off near the branch an' was headed in the direction of the Cross an' Circle, tho' I don't cal'clate they was goin' there. Me an' Hartley headed 'em off, an' questioned 'em, an' they said they was just takin' a ride. I tol' 'em they better keep away from the Cross an' Circle an' not to git off 'n the ranch. It's a cinch they're off that way!"

As Walker and one or two of the other men were about to start, Bill Jordan called a halt. Turning to the men, he said—

"Let ever'body drop what they's a doin' an' come along. Better take yer guns, fer the's no tellin' what kind o' mischief them two's got mixed into. Spread out fan-shape, an' keep within' hailin' distance. Don't overlook nuthin'."

Within less time than it takes to tell it, every available man on the Bar O ranch was in the saddle and headed in a north-westerly direction. It would have been impossible to back-

trail Monty, even in daylight; but in the present light, it was out of the question; and the only logical method was to go to where the boys had been last seen. Naturally, Walker and Hartley led the searching party, Mr. Sherwood keeping by the side of Bill Jordan, who was really in command.

"What do you make of it, Jordan?" Mr. Sherwood asked, a shade of anxiety coming over his face.

"Why, Boss, it prob'ally ain't nuthin', much —horse might 'a' got scared an' throwed him, tho' 'f thet was the case, 't looks as tho' Injun might 'a' ketched him—but mebbe not. 'Tain't really much good spec'latin', fer any one of a dozen things could 'a' happened. The's one thing I bin studyin' 'bout an' I hope it ain't thet."

"What do you mean?" asked Sherwood.

"Well," said Bill, "you mebbe'll remember when yo' an' me was taking' 'bout thet Cross an' Circle outfit, after Ross done paid us a visit, I took notice thet Whitey was almighty interested in what we wuz sayin', an' fer thet

reason I took yo' off to one side where he couldn't hear. 'Taint altogether out 'n reason thet he an' thet Injun concluded to do a little scoutin' aroun' on the'r own account. I wouldn't want 'em to get tied up with no rus'lers." Bill obviously did not want to alarm Mr. Sherwood unnecessarily, but there was no doubt that he thought the situation serious.

"You mean the Cross and Circle people?" asked Mr. Sherwood.

"Well, I ain't quite sayin' thet," said Bill, "but I got idees!"

"You think," said Mr. Sherwood, after a pause, "that if they really got anything on the rustlers, or interfered with them in any way, that they might—put the boys out of the way?" And he looked apprehensively at Bill.

"Mebbe not quite thet," said Bill, "but they might make it all-fired uncomfortable fer them two kids."

Mr. Sherwood did not reply, and for several miles the men rode over the rolling prairie in a gradual ascent toward the foot-hills of the mountains. Fortunately a bright moon gave

sufficient light to make their progress easy and rapid. At intervals the men fired shots into the air and hallooed; but there was no answering shot or call.

The party finally arrived at the branch where the trail of the cattle had been lost, and Bill Jordan called the men together for a consultation. Here it was obvious that there must be a division of their forces; and although he had no logical reason that he could have advanced, Bill felt that their course lay, in general, toward the Ross ranch. Call it intuition, or a "hunch," or what you will, it was strong within him, and he determined to follow it. Often a plainsman has nothing else to guide him—he must rely upon intuition alone—and it is surprising how often it proves to be true. And so it was decided that part of the outfit should ride down the east bank of the river toward the Cross and Circle ranch, and the others, under Bill, should approach it along the left bank.

If the Ross outfit offered nothing else, Bill made up his mind that he would question the

men and get any information in regard to the boys that they might possess. Accordingly, six or seven of the men under Walker, who had ridden herd in that section for many weeks and was thoroughly familiar with every detail of it, took the east side of the stream; and the others, under Bill, swam their horses to the other side, and soon were under way toward the Cross and Circle.

Bill gave orders that as the two parties got near the Ross ranch, they were to preserve quiet, and look the situation over before making known their presence.

At the first movement that Whitey made in the hay, Ross had drawn his gun; but when he saw the boyish face as it looked into his, he let his arm drop to his side; but as the boy started to scramble down from the hay-rick, Ross grabbed him by the collar and held him securely, taking his rifle from him roughly and jerking him to his feet.

"It's only me, Mr. Ross," said Whitey, as he stood before the rancher. "I was riding out

by the river and discovered the cave and came in to explore it. I didn't mean any harm, but when I heard the men coming, I hid in the hay."

"Oh, you did, did you!" sneered Ross, with rising anger, as Crowley and the other men crowded around. "You're thet young Sherwood kid, ain't ye?"

"Yes," said Whitey, coolly, "my name is Sherwood."

"Well," said Crowley, menacingly, as he faced Whitey and glared at him, "I reckon your name is 'Mud' from now on! What business had you to come snoopin' 'round here an' comin' into private tunnels an' things like that?"

"I didn't know anything about your tunnel being private, and I don't see any harm in coming into it anyway. You often come over onto our land. I've seen you, myself."

"Where's that little Injun skunk thet travels 'round with you?" asked Ross. "Wasn't he with yo'? Thet was his hoss we got in the ranch yard."

"Oh, Injun let's me ride his horse wherever I want to," said Whitey, and this appeared to satisfy the men that Whitey was alone.

It was evident that Whitey wasn't going to scare easily, and a problem was presented to Ross and his men. They did not know how much Whitey had seen or heard; to let him go would be hazardous, and to keep him, they knew would be perhaps equally dangerous. Ross and Crowley consulted together, a little apart from Whitey and the others, but in a moment one or two of the men joined them. Whitey stood looking innocently about and apparently unconcerned; but he was really much disturbed. He did not fear for himself, for he felt that the gang would scarcely dare kill him; but Injun's case was different. Pedro was very much in evidence, and he was menacing enough even toward Whitey. What his attitude would be if he got hold of Injun left little to conjecture. And so Whitey determined to divert any suspicions the gang might have as far from Injun as possible.

Some of the men were for doing away with

Whitey at once, on the theory that "dead men —or boys either—tell no tales." But Ross and Crowley were not inclined to do this, just yet, and Ross told the men to "go slow." He determined to find out first how much Whitey knew.

"Was yo' here when we was brandin' our cattle?" asked Ross, taking the boy roughly by the shoulder.

"I suppose you were branding some cattle," answered Whitey; "but I was back in the hay. Let go of my shoulder! You haven't got any right to hold me that way!"

Whitey made a movement as though to draw his revolver from his hip-pocket, but Ross seized his arm and wrenched the little pearl-handled .22 away from him. "Gimme thet thing!" Ross yelled. "What d' ye mean by tryin' to draw this here pop-gun on me? Hey? "I'll hold you a good deal tighter 'n that 'fore I git thro' with ye!" he snarled, shaking Whitey violently. "Yo' shut yer trap an' give a civil answer when y're spoke to, er I'll put ye where the dogs won't bite ye!"

"Let me tend to him, Boss," said the tall man who had come with Ross to the Bar O ranch; "I got a way of handlin' kids like him," and he advanced as though to take hold of Whitey.

Before Ross or Crowley could interfere, the tall man reached for Whitey and the latter, not waiting for or relying upon their assistance, parried the man's lead, and stepping in close to him, planted a severe straight right-hand punch in the man's stomach that doubled that gentleman up.

"You let me alone, you big sheep-stealing jail-bird!" yelled Whitey. "I know you, Mister 'One-Card' Tucker, and I tell you right now that if you put your hand on me, Bill Jordan will tend to you, and tend to you right—like he did before—at San Quentin!"

This whole performance was a bomb-shell in the Ross camp. While they were all astonished at the promptness and vigor and skill with which Whitey had delivered the punch that doubled up Tucker, the fact that the boy was familiar with the man's record, and that Jor-

dan had undoubtedly recognized him on the occasion of the visit to the Bar O, created considerable consternation. The next few minutes, however, were occupied in quelling the outraged Mr. "One-Card" Tucker.

"Lemme git at him! I'll kill thet little pizen pup!" howled Tucker, who, as soon as he got his breath, had made an effort to draw his revolver; and there is no doubt that Whitey would have fared badly if Ross and Crowley had not grabbed the man and taken the gun away from him, after considerable difficulty.

"Gimme that gun," yelled Ross as he grappled with the infuriated Tucker. "Ain't you big enough to handle a boy without that? Any more o' that stuff an' I'll wring your neck!"

The laughter of several of the men over the fact that the big man had been doubled up by a fourteen-year-old boy did not tend to soothe Mr. Tucker's feelings. It was of course obvious that in a bout of fisticuffs with Tucker, Whitey would have had no chance; but he was a husky boy and had delivered the blow on *exactly* the right spot—the solar plexus—and it

really doesn't take a very hard blow there to cause a man considerable annoyance.

But the affair brought up a new complication; there could be no doubt, now, that the head of the Bar O outfit must have some suspicions about the personnel of the Cross and Circle. Had this knowledge come to Ross at any other time, he would probably have publicly discharged Tucker, and disclaimed any knowledge of his character when he hired him. But it was a trifle late to adopt this course now. Furthermore, it would be most unwise to let any very great harm happen to Whitey; he must, of course, be held a prisoner so that he could give no information to the Bar O people, but to murder him in cold blood was taking too much of a chance, even in a desperate situation like this. Ross knew, too, that Whitey's continued absence from the Bar O ranch would cause an immediate and exhaustive search to be made for the boy, and he was in no position to stand anything like that. Quite a dilemma—he didn't dare keep Whitey, and he didn't dare let him go!

Of the two evils, the former seemed the lesser, and he and Crowley determined to keep the boy until such time as they could get rid of the "counterfeit" cattle, and, in a way, "put their house in order."

In fact Ross had great confidence in the secrecy of the under-ground chamber. There was very little chance that any one would discover it at the river—not one in a thousand; and in the house above the entrance to it was most cleverly concealed, so that even a careful examination might take place without its existence being even suspected. The ranch was apparently without a cellar, as could be seen from the outside. But it was built almost against the high and rocky cliff on one side, and it was at this point that the entrance to the subterranean chamber was gained.

In the living-room of the ranch there stood a large wardrobe in which were hung various articles of clothing, as well as lariats and other ranchmen's equipment. The wide doors of this wardrobe were usually open and a full view of the interior afforded to any one who entered

the room. This very fact would have served to divert suspicion from that direction even had the searcher been aware that there was a chamber below. In the back of this wardrobe was a door, with invisible hinges, that opened onto a stairway leading down to the chamber.

The lock that operated the door was controlled by one of the hooks that were apparently fastened onto the back of the wardrobe for the purpose of hanging clothes upon it, but also answered the purpose of a door-knob.

When the hook was turned three times to the right, the catch of the lock was released and the door, which was really the back of the wardrobe, swung back and revealed the steps. The lock was a spring-lock, and was opened from the cavern side by the ordinary knob that operates such locks. The cavern was really not under the house at all, but to one side of it; and thus sounding the floors would reveal nothing hollow underneath.

Though the house itself, as used by the former owner, was nothing out of the ordinary and almost exactly like many of the other

houses that were plentiful in that section, yet under the Ross regime it had been made into a veritable fortress, although this was not particularly noticeable from the outside. The windows had been barred sufficiently close to prevent a man from getting in or going out; and on the inside were iron shutters with loopholes in them. Through these holes a rifle could be thrust and aimed, with little danger that the user of it would be hit by a bullet from the exterior.

The doors were of heavy planks, and were fitted with double bars which, when in place, would make the forcing of the doors a difficult matter. And, in case things got too warm, the cave offered a refuge, and the tunnel to the river provided a means of escape. Altogether, it looked like a pretty safe place to carry on such a business as the Cross and Circle was engaged in.

But in all these calculations, Ross was reckoning without Injun! That young man was destined to prove quite a factor in the upsetting of some very well-laid plans.

CHAPTER XVII

HELD IN CAPTIVITY

"THE only thing to do," said Ross to Crowley, as they talked apart from the others, "is to tie up this here kid until we can make a get-away. The whole shebang is blowed, now thet he knows as much as he does. Me an' you can do a sneak with what the' is in the safe, an' let these gazoots hold the bag."

"I'm in favor of a get-away, all right, fer yo' an' me, but not yet! The's altogether too much stuff to leave behind; an' there ain't no use o' gittin' cold feet. What kin thet Bar O outfit do, anyhow? The' ain't one chanct in a million thet they kin find anythin', an' while I ain't in favor o' puttin' this here kid's light out, we kin keep him here indefinit'—ef we want to. The' be an awful squawk when he

turns up missin', but kids has bin missin' afore, an' they ain't got no call to lay nuthin' at our door. Ef they do, an' worst comes to worst, we'll give 'em a battle!"

It took some time for Crowley to convince Ross that this was the proper course to pursue; but eventually Ross determined to stick it out, and he and Crowley came back to the others, and Crowley gave the orders.

"A couple of yo' men block up the tunnel so 't a snake can't get through either way. Ross, let's yo' an' me hobble this here young Jim Corbett so 't he'll stay with us a spell." Turning to Whitey, he said, "Yo' are goin' t' be a guest o' the ranch fer a time, Jim. 'S long's yo' don't make no fuss an' try to git away, er t' put somethin' over, yer' goin' to be all right an' treated nice. But the first break yo' make —well, Son, that'll be 'bout the last thing yo' 'll ever do!"

Crowley and Ross grabbed Whitey, who resisted to the best of his ability. "You've got no right to keep me here!" he protested. "I haven't committed any crime and I don't pro-

pose to be made a prisoner! If I am, you bet you'll pay for it!"

"Mebbe not," said Crowley, "but jes' the same, we ain't goin' to dispense with yo'r society for a spell. Yo' come without no invitation, an' now I reckon yo' might as well tarry 'long with us. Ef we let yo' go out at night mebbe one o' them ontamed Jack-rabbits might sneak up an' bite yo'. Hol' on, yo' young scorpion!"

The occasion of the last remark was a solid kick on the shins that Whitey landed on the taunting Crowley as the latter reached for the boy and tried to hold his arms so that Ross could tie them. Whitey did not propose to stand still and be hobbled, and he left no doubt of it in the minds of either Ross or Crowley. Of course, the boy stood no chance in the hands of the two strong men; but for a few moments there was considerable fuss; before they got Whitey "roped and thrown," he had inflicted a number of painful bruises on each of the men.

"Sufferin' cats!" said Crowley as he limped

away from the bound and prostrate form of Whitey. "Of all the varmints ever I tackled that's the worst! I wish I'd let Tucker alone when he wanted to shoot him up!"

Ross swore roundly and with great fervency as he tried to stop a nose-bleed with his coat-sleeve. Whitey, in his wrath, threw all discretion to the winds, as he struggled at his bonds, but could not loose them.

"You wait—you two cattle-thieves!" sputtered Whitey, as he lay on the floor of the cavern. "You wait till the Bar O outfit gets done with you. You and your counterfeit brands! Bill Jordan will hold a necktie-party and don't you forget it!"

"Put a gag onto him, Crowley," said Ross, as he wiped away some blood from his nose.

"Put it on yo'self," answered Crowley, "I got a belly-full o' monkeyin' with him, right now!" And Crowley showed a severe bruise on his shin as he rolled up the leg of his trousers.

"I'll put it on," said Tucker, eagerly; and taking a handkerchief, he bent over Whitey

and started to insert the gag in no gentle manner. In a moment Tucker let out a howl and jumped back, nursing a badly bitten hand. With an oath he sprang back at Whitey and delivered a severe downward blow at Whitey's face, but Whitey ducked to one side, and Tucker's fist crashed against the rocky floor of the cavern. Before he had time to deliver another, Crowley had pulled him off, and hurled him aside.

"Now, listen, you big stiff," said Crowley, menacingly. "If yo' pulls any more o' that stuff, I'll tend to yo'—er mebbe I'll untie that kid an' sic him onto yo'! I knowed yo' was pretty low-down, but I give yo' more credit 'n to want to soak a *boy*—an' him with his hands an' feet tied!"

"Well, look what he done to me!" yelled Tucker, exhibiting his hands—one badly bitten, and the other bruised and bleeding from its contact with the rocky floor of the cavern. "Look what he done!"

"Well, yo' wanted the job of gaggin' him, didn't yo'?" said Crowley. "Yo' didn't s'pose

thet rarin' catamount was gonna lie there an' let yo' put yo'r finger into his mouth 'thout bitin' it, did yo'? An' as fer thet other hand —I guess, mebbe, yo' ain't got no great kick comin' 'bout thet. I'd like t' seen yo' break yo'r arm!"

If Mr. "One-Card" Tucker was looking for sympathy, he needed some powerful glasses; for no matter how depraved and dishonest men are, there usually remains in them a liking for fair play and a certain sympathy for the under dog. And no matter how low their standard of morals may be otherwise, there are very few Western men who will stand by and see a man abuse either a woman or a boy or a dumb animal. It isn't in the breed.

Crowley turned to Ross, who, by this time, had managed to stop his nose-bleed: "I don't reckon thet this here ragin' hyena needs no gag. We'll stow him back in the cellar, an' he kin yell his head off, ef he wants to; he can't raise no holler loud 'nuff fer anybody to hear. A couple o' yo' men take an' tote him back into the angle back o' the cattle. An' look out how

you handle him! He's a ringtail Looloo, with a stinger on head an' tail!"

Two of the men picked up the bound Whitey had started back with him, but Crowley stopped them. Turning to all the men, he said, "An' right here, I gives notice—partic'lar to yo', One-Card—thet ef anythin' happens to thet kid, I'm gonna settle with you personal'. Thet makes yo' his g'ardeen an' pertector. D' yo' understand? Rustlin' cattle is bad enough, but murderin' babies is a heap worse, an' I ain't takin' no chances facin' a jury on them partic'lar indictments."

"He's a fine, healthy baby!" said Ross and Tucker, feeling of their wounds.

And all this time Injun lay still in the hay and waited for his opportunity.

The two men proceeded to carry Whitey around the pen in which the cattle were coralled, to where the passage turned at a sharp angle. The dim light of their lantern sufficed to illuminate only that portion of the cavern in the immediate vicinity, but judging from the echoes that reverberated from the re-

cesses beyond, the cave ran for a considerable distance into the mountain. The men deposited Whitey upon the rocky floor with little ceremony, and retraced their steps; and soon he was left in darkness and silence. The two men were joined at the stairs leading to the house above by those who had been sent to block up the entrance from the river, and the closing of the heavy door above left the two boys alone in the cavern.

CHAPTER XVIII

INJUN TAKES A HAND

INJUN lost little time in crawling noiselessly out of the hay, after he had heard the footsteps die away on the stairs and the door above close; but he was cautious enough to lie still for a moment and listen, for the darkness was such that he could see nothing. Climbing down to the floor of the cavern, he produced his flint and steel; and in a moment he had lighted a sliver of wood that he had chipped from one of the planks with his hunting-knife. With this light he located a larger piece of stick, and soon had a torch that lit up the space around him for considerable distance. He glided swiftly around the cattle corral, and in a few seconds he had loosed Whitey's bonds, and the latter stretched his limbs that were even then

beginning to feel the numbing effects of the tight rope that had pinioned him.

It was necessary to do something, and that something quickly, for the boys did not know at what moment the men might return. Injun split a number of long slivers from a plank to serve as torches, and then the boys made their way back toward the entrance to the river. They found that the tunnel had been effectually closed not more than fifty feet from its mouth by a heavy door that had been barred and padlocked, and which resisted all their efforts to open it.

The fact that they had been able to enter the place at all had been due to the carelessness of the last party of ranchers that had entered and neglected to close and fasten it. Long immunity makes men careless about the most important things.

Finding that escape in this direction was impossible, the boys made their way back to the other end, but found there was no exit there. They then came back to the stairs that led to the room above. Here they held a consulta-

tion, and decided to mount the stairs and see what could be learned. Cautiously ascending the stairs, Injun listened at the door; and, after a moment, reported to Whitey that there were several men in the room playing cards and discussing the situation. After examining the lock by the light of one of the splinters. Whitey saw that it could be opened by simply turning the knob; and returning to the floor of the cavern, he formulated a plan, which, although a desperate one and probably likely to fail, seemed to be their only chance.

"It's dark by this time," said Whitey, "and probably the only light in the room is a swinging one over the table, like all the ranch-houses have." Injun nodded assent, and Whitey continued: "We'll both go to the top of the stairs, and I'll open the door quickly and smash the lamp. There'll be a big fuss and confusion, and maybe you can slip through the room and out one of the windows without being caught. What do you think of it?"

Injun thought a while and finally nodded; he knew that the ranch-house windows were

barred, but he also knew that he could probably wiggle through them, and he indicated that he was ready as soon as Whitey was. Whitey selected a stout stick at the corral, and noiselessly the two boys climbed the stairs, and Whitey cautiously turned the knob. The door swung back toward them noiselessly, and by good luck the doors of the wardrobe that concealed the door were partially closed in another second, Whitey and Injun stood in the wardrobe.

From his position Whitey could see a part of the room, and he pointed out to Injun that there was a window at the end of the room through which the latter might climb without having to pass the table. Injun was to remain behind one of the doors of the wardrobe until Whitey had smashed the lamp, and then he was to make a run for it. The conversation of the men was plainly audible.

"I ain't none too stuck on the bet as she lays," said the heavy voice of Ross, who had by this time imbibed considerable whiskey, "an' I ain't shore but the best thing 'd be to choke

thet kid an' chuck him in the river. Ef he ever gits loose, it's good night!"

There was a murmur of assent at this from some of the men, but Crowley was plainly against it. "Yo' all is afraid o' yo'r own shadder! In the first place, how's he goin' t' git loose? The' ain't no way fer him t' git out 'n thet cellar 'cept through this room, even ef he got shet of 'bout twenty-five foot o' rope thet was drawed some tight 'round his arms an' legs. An' 't looks like we all might stop him 'fore he got very far ef he come this way!" and Crowley looked about him contemptuously. "I'm a heap more 'fraid o' facin' a murder indictment 'n I am of anythin' thet kid er the hull, blame Bar O outfit kin do! I tell yo' the' ain't no danger o' their findin' him 'n the' is o' thet lamp explodin'!"

Whitey had set himself for the spring, and he threw open the doors of the wardrobe and reached the table in one bound. With a blow of the stick he shattered the lamp, and then swung it about him vigorously. Taken entirely unawares, and being totally ignorant of

what had struck them, there was indescribable pandemonium for a time. The room was in almost utter darkness, and several of the men having received hearty whacks over the head from the club in Whitey's hands, contributed shouts and curses to the general uproar.

"What the jumpin' tom-cuts has struck us?" shouted Crowley in consternation as he received a whack across his face from the stick, and a deep and fervent oath from Ross indicated that he, too, had "got his."

Each was afraid to shoot lest he hit one of his own gang, and, indeed, the whole outfit was at a decided disadvantage. No one saw the sinuous Injun as he glided out of the wardrobe and slipped along the wall to the window. The bars were not very far apart, but it is probable that Injun would have gone through any space that a rattlesnake could; and in less time that it takes to tell it, Injun had squirmed his way between the bars and dropped to the ground in the darkness outside.

The solid thumps that Whitey bestowed on the various anatomical parts of those at the

table had the effect of scattering them in all directions; and they were completely in the dark as to what kind of a cyclone had struck the place. They could make no individual or concerted resistance, and the result was that they simply tried to get out of the way as best they could. The opening of a door by one of the men, who was really trying to escape, let in a flood of light, and several of the men recognized Whitey as the source of the trouble. "Holy Mackerel!" yelled Crowley, "ef 't ain't thet ragin' catamount got loose! Grab him, there, Ross, quick, afore he puts the whole dump on th' bum!"

With a yell of rage and amazement, four of the ranchers fell upon Whitey in a sort of football formation, while that young man fought and bit and clawed and kicked as long as he could move a muscle.

As soon as the lanterns were brought in and the bruised and cursing cowboys had disentangled themselves, Whitey was yanked to his feet in no gentle manner; and while the irate Ross almost choked him to death, Crowley

bound him tight in a lariat much after the fashion that a mummy is swathed in bandages. Finally, when this was thoroughly and completely done, Ross relinquished his grip on Whitey's wind-pipe, and stood back and wiped the perspiration from his red and bloated face.

There was a large and rapidly swelling welt over one of Ross' eyes where Whitey's club had landed in the whirlwind assault that he had made upon the gang. In fact, there were few of the men who were not "decorated" in some manner, for Whitey had played no favorites in wielding his shillalah in the dark. Crowley's lip was swollen to several times its natural size, and it was evident that he was having hard work to control his temper; and he, as well as the others, glared at the boy in a way that boded ill for him.

But Whitey returned their black looks with interest; his fighting-blood was up,—he had no regard for consequences; and had he been loose, he would have charged all of them. One thing only was the salvation of Whitey. Crowley caught sight of several of the men nursing their

various bruises—the welt above Ross' eye was assuming ludicrous proportions—and Crowley laughed!

"No danger, hey?" snarled Ross. "He couldn't git loose, er nuthin'! Oh, no! He's jes' as harmless as a ton o' dynamite!"

"No more chanct o' him gittin' loose 'n the' is o' the lamp explodin'!" put in another, sarcastically. "Well, by Judas, 't looks t' me as tho' the lamp done exploded!"

"Yo' all said a mouthful!" admitted Crowley, feeling of his lip, and speaking with some difficulty. "An' I reckon mebbe I was among them present when she blew! I ain't got real bright yet after thet wallop he giv' me!"

"Yo're shore pretty bright, anyhow!" said Ross, making a painful effort to sneer. "Seems to me it was yo' said he didn't need no gag ner nuthin'! Mebbe he don't—but he's goin' to git one—one 'at 'll shet him up fer 'bout five hundred years, an' then some! I'm tryin' to decide whether t' bile 'im over a slow fire er t' pull 'im apart with four hosses! I bin shin-kicked, thumb-bit, an' walloped across the

nose with a club, an' I reckon that'll be 'bout all this evenin'! The' ain't no child-wonder goin' to put them things over onto me an' get away with it—not while I got my health, he ain't."

"Don't look as tho' none of us 'd have much health ef this here pizen varmint ain't took in hand pronto!" said Tucker, who had received a crack over his sore knuckles that put his hand out of business. "I ain't got no more scruples 'bout shootin' him up 'n I'd hev 'bout killin' a coyote!" and Tucker tried to draw his gun with his sore hand.

"The' won't nuthin' like thet come off—not while I'm 'round!" said Crowley, firmly. "Ef seven er twelve big, over-growed huskies like we all is has t' call in the Sassiety fer the Pervention uv Cruelty by Childern an' holler fer help ever' time this here half-portion shows up in our midst, I reckon we all better make application fer admission to the home fer crippled old wimmen an' set out onto the piazzy in rockin' chairs, 'long with the rest on 'em!"

And Crowley looked at the battered group

and laughed. He knew that the situation was a dangerous one for the boy, and that it had to be handled with considerable tact; and he chose one of the strongest weapons at his command —ridicule. Keeping his eye on "One-Card" Tucker and Pedro—the latter had not come out of the fracas unscathed, and although he had not said anything, was a dangerous customer, —Crowley continued: "Fur 's I'm concerned, personal', bein' only a growed man an' him a boy, I'm calc'latin' on climbin' a tree whenever I git his scent; but 't looks t' me 's though we all might band together an' pertect ourselfs agin ol' Calamity, here, without cuttin' his throat er shootin' him up when his hands is tied!

"Look here, Bud," he said, turning to Whitey, and tactfully trying to change the subject, "how cum yo' to git loose, anyhow? I know I done roped yo' myself, an' I ain't no amachoor—not at ropin', I ain't."

"One of our Bar O cattle that you thieves 'counterfeited' was a friend of mine and came up and ate the rope in two!" said Whitey, with

a laugh. "How else do you suppose I could get loose?"

As Whitey said these indiscreet words Ross uttered an oath and started to draw his gun.

"That settles it!" he said. "He's wise to the whole game, an' I'm goin' to cook his goose right now!" And this determination seemed to meet with general approval. Tucker and Pedro drew nearer and backed Ross up.

Crowley turned swiftly and faced them, his eyes narrowed to slits. "Be yo' goin' to play a lone hand," asked Crowley, "er is this a free-fer-all? I ain't noway pertic'lar, but I jes' want t' know whether I'm foreman here er not."

"Yo're foreman, all right," said Ross, boiling with rage, "but I'm the Boss! An' *I* say I'm goin' to croak the little skunk!"

Crowley stood perfectly still between the three men and the boy, his hands on his hips, and his jaw set tight.

"Le' 's see yo' try it!" he said. "I'm standin' right here an' waitin'!"

CHAPTER XIX

INJUN TO THE RESCUE

When Injun dropped to the ground from the barred window, he made off in the darkness toward the corral, dodging behind such objects as seemed likely to offer any concealment, although he figured that pursuit was unlikely, as the men at the ranch-house had their hands full with Whitey. He kept his eyes open for such of the outfit as might be without the house, for he knew that capture would mean, not only his own death, but would destroy the last chance of bringing aid to his pal. Once he had arrived at the high bank of the river, he felt that his chances to escape observation had materially increased, and he set out on a dog-trot to cover the miles that lay between himself and the Bar O ranch.

Meanwhile, the two searching parties, one on either side of the river, were sweeping toward the Cross and Circle ranch, leaving little of the ground unobserved as they proceeded. Acting under Bill Jordan's orders, the parties maintained silence as they drew nearer the Cross and Circle. When they were not more than half a mile distant from it, the party on the left bank of the river suddenly drew up their horses in response to a call that sounded close by, and Injun scrambled over the edge of the bank and ran to them. In a few words Injun told what had happened, and Bill Jordan swung the boy up behind him, called the men to cross from the opposite bank, and the whole party, some fifteen or sixteen strong, was soon headed for the Cross and Circle at a gallop.

Arrived at the ranch yard, under the guidance of Injun, Jordan located six men at the mouth of the tunnel in case an attempt should be made to escape that way; and with the balance of the party he rode straight for the house. Injun, once he had pointed out the

tunnel, slipped away unnoticed and made for the window through which he had escaped.

Inside the house the situation was grave for Whitey. Crowley faced the enraged Ross who was backed up by the more desperate members of the gang. His cool nerve had a disconcerting effect upon the Boss, and it is probable that had he dealt with him alone, he would have been able to prevent him from carrying out his avowed purpose. But it is a difficult thing to keep an eye on several men at once, and by a stealthy and almost imperceptible movement "One-Card" Tucker drew his revolver slowly from its holster.

He stood with his side to the window, at which Injun had posted himself, and there was no doubt as to what Tucker intended to do. But before he had a chance to raise his gun an arrow from Injun's bow pierced the muscles of the man's arm, pinning it to his side!

Tucker dropped to the floor with a howl of agony, and it was a second or two before the other men realized what had happened, for there had been no sound; and until they saw the

arrow, which had gone entirely through Tucker's biceps and was imbedded deep in the muscles of his back, they were ignorant of the presence of an unknown enemy.

For a second the men stood dazed—as is always the case when something of a more or less mysteriously disconcerting nature happens—and as they turned hastily toward the windows to ascertain the source of the attack, they saw the Winchesters of the Bar O boys glisten between the bars, and heard the voice of Bill Jordan shout, "Hands up—an' keep 'em up!"

It was the work of but a few moments to complete the capture of the gang. The seven outlaws were faced to the wall, and while they were in this position, and under cover of the Winchesters, Injun squirmed through the bars of the window, relieved the ranchers of their weapons, loosed Whitey's bonds, and then unbarred the heavy door and admitted the Bar O men.

To tie the hands of the outlaws securely

behind their backs was the work of a few moments, and then they were faced about.

"A fine gang of high-binders!" commented Bill Jordan, as he looked them over. "I had your number, all right, Yancy, though sence yo' growed them wriskers yo' bin castin' asparagus on the good name o' 'Ross!' I reckon, mebbe, the folks down to Albuquerque 'll be right tickled t' see thet there ugly mug o' your'n—'speci'ly the Sher'ff. An' here's my ol' friend, 'One-Card' Tucker, all ornamented up 'ith arrers an' such! I reckon yo' done drawed yo'r last card, ain't yo', Tucker?"

"That's the meanest scoundrel in the whole outfit!" exclaimed Whitey. "If he'd had his way, I wouldn't be here now! He got that hand by swinging a punch at me when I lay on the floor with my hands tied! It must have been Injun who made a pin-cushion out of him with that arrow!"

"'Pin-cushion' is right!" said Jordan, looking at Tucker's arm; "but I want to tell you, Son, the' ain't no such thing as 'the *meanest*

skunk' in thet bunch—the's all the same kind o' pizen. One 's 'bout like t' other."

"No," said Whitey, "you're mistaken about that; there's one man here, Crowley, the foreman, who saved my life twice—once when Tucker wanted to shoot me, and once when Ross tried it. He wouldn't have it, and he stood off the whole gang."

"Which is him?" asked Bill, in an incredulous tone.

"Here he is," said Whitey, pointing to the foreman.

"Step out here, yo' Crowley person, an' lemme have a slant at yo'."

Crowley looked at Bill sullenly, but did not move. "I ain't askin' no favors," he said. "I reckon I kin take my medicine with the rest."

"Seems like yo' was some squeamish in this here matter," said Bill, eyeing Crowley keenly. "I'm s'prised at yo'! Was yo' 'fraid?"

"I reckon I wasn't 'fraid none. I done 'bout ever'thing in my time, but I draw the line at murderin' kids an' wimmen. Thet ain't in my line o' business!" Then adding, indifferently,

"Go on with the proceedin's! Don't let me hender yo' none!"

Bill stepped closer to the man and looked intently into his face. "No," he said after a moment, "I guess you wasn't 'fraid!" Then he asked, "Was you ever in Juarez, Mister—er—Crowley?"

"Yes," answered Crowley, "but not recent, I wasn't."

"When?"

"Several times," said Crowley. "Th' las' time was when the' was a right smart o' trouble into Silver-Dollar Joe's place—consider'ble shootin' and such. Havin' the luck to git out with mostly a hull skin, 'cept in a few places, I never felt no call to go back."

"I thought so," said Bill. "Name wasn't 'Crowley' then, was it?" Crowley smiled and shook his head.

Bill walked over to Crowley and turned the man around, and taking out his knife, he cut the rope that bound his hands. Turning to Mr. Sherwood and the rest of the Bar O outfit, he said, "Gents, what I'm doin' is on my own re-

sponsibility. Ef the's any objections to it, I'm agreeable to givin' my reasons." He looked about him, and no one seemed to offer any objection.

"Go as fur 's yo' like, Bill," said one or two of the men; and Sherwood nodded.

Bill turned again to Crowley. "Yo' don't b'long to no such outfit as this here!" he said. "Yo' pick out yo'r gun an' Winchester out'n thet pile, an' get onto yo'r pinto an' see how fur yo' kin ride away from these vicinities 'fore sun-up."

Then turning to Mr. Sherwood, Bill said, "Boss, jes' lemme have forty dollars an' charge the same to me, ef you'll be so kind." Mr. Sherwood handed the money to Jordan, who passed it over to Crowley without a word. "Thanks," said the latter, "that's right, as I figger." "Yes," said Jordan, "that's the way I figger it too. Good-by an' good luck."

Crowley turned to go and then hesitated; he looked keenly at Bill, and then he said, "I ain't s'posed to give no state's ev'dence, er nuthin'

like thet, be I? 'Cause ef I am, I reckon I'll stay an' play out the string."

"I didn't mention no conditions, did I?" said Bill, a little heatedly.

Crowley turned, picked out his weapons from the pile and then turned to Jordan. "Ef you value the lives o' them hombreys you got lined up there," he said, "I'd advise you to tie up thet boy, too. He's liable to be too rough with 'em."

Then he turned and strode out of the room; and in a few moments the men heard the hoof-beats of his horse as he galloped away.

Bill offered no explanation of his leniency and none was asked; but such was the confidence in Jordan's squareness, that it is improbable that any one felt that an injustice had been done. Certainly Whitey was glad and relieved to know that the man who had twice saved his life had, in a measure, been repaid in his own coin. He also knew that there was a story behind it all—a story of some previous relations that Bill had had with the man—and

he resolved to get it out of Jordan at the first favorable opportunity.

"I guess I may as well take my gun, too," said Whitey as he picked up the pearl-handled .22 from the pile that had been taken from the Ross gang, and thus was the gift of little Bobby restored to its rightful owner.

"I was wonderin' how thet puttey-blower come to be in thet outfit?" said Bill, smiling. "You want to look out, Son! Ef yo' should happen t' shoot a man with thet there thing an' he finds it out, he might be vexed!" Whitey grinned, but pocketed the little gun, which turned out to be better than it looked, long afterwards.

The arrival of the Sheriff and a posse simplified matters as far as the disposition of the outlaws was concerned. Jordan had taken the matter in hand immediately after Ross's visit to the Bar O, and had dispatched a messenger for the Sheriff, feeling that he had enough evidence against the Cross and Circle outfit to warrant that proceeding.

After the whole party had explored the

place under the guidance of the two boys, and the stolen cattle had been identified, they all came back to the living-room of the ranch. The Sheriff took Jordan and Sherwood aside and said,

"There is another matter that mebbe this here Mr. Ross, as he calls himself, can throw a little light onto, an' that is, how he cum to git possession o' this here ranch. It's a cinch he didn't buy it off'n the former owner, Bradley; and nobody seems to be able to locate where this here Bradley's went to. I was calc'latin' to make some inquiries 'bout it, it havin' bin called to my attention, when yo'r messenger cum. The's some o' Bradley's folks 'd like to know 'bout the transaction."

"Well," said Bill, "I dunno, but 't seems like ef I was Sher'ff an' I got my hooks onto a bird like this here Yancy-Ross person, I dunno 's it 'd be necessary to ask the cuss to do any great 'mount of explainin'. The's a powerful lot o' nice trees on the way to the Bar O!"

"So the' is," said the Sheriff, "now 't I cum

to think of it! They ain't bore no 'fruit' fer a consider'ble spell, neither, hev they?"

"Not sence them other rustlers was discouraged 'bout three or four years back. Some o' my boys 'd be plumb tickled to death t' escort them hombreys t' jail—*er some place.*"

"Hmm," said the Sheriff, meditatively. "I'll think it over."

At this moment Whitey and Injun came up to Bill, all excitement.

"Pedro isn't here!" said Whitey. "He was here just before you came, but he's not among the prisoners."

"Him Pedro gone!" said Injun laconically.

Jordan was all attention in a second: "Here, Walker, Bob, an' the lot o' yo'—the boys says thet our ol' friend Pedro was here jes' before we cum! Take a gang an' go over this dump with a fine-tooth comb! I'll give fifty dollars to the man thet brings him in, an' I ain't pertic'lar what kind o' condition he's in, neither!"

"Yes, an' I'll add another fifty to it!" put in the Sheriff. "An' the deader he is, the better

I'll like it!" he added, heartily. "Thet coyote has cost the county 'bout enough as 't is!"

A thorough search of the house, cellar, and the vicinity failed to reveal any trace of Pedro, much to the chagrin of Bill Jordan, not to mention that of those who were desirous of earning a hundred dollars.

Injun shook his head. "Him Pedro gone!" he said, ruefully. It was a matter of some consequence to Injun—as events turned out.

CHAPTER XX

THE TRUTH ABOUT CROWLEY

THERE remained little to do at the ranch which had formerly been the home of the Cross and Circle outfit, and this little was soon done. Several of the Bar O men were left to look after the stock and keep guard. Injun's pinto was found tied in the corral; and both owner and horse gave every evidence of delight at their reunion. Much to the regret of the boys of the Bar O, the Sheriff decided to escort the prisoners to the jail himself rather than have the ranchers escort them to *"some place;"* and, therefore, the trees on the way to the Bar O did not bear any "fruit" as the result of the contemplated "neck-tie party."

It was found that "One-Card" Tucker's

wound was a severe one, and he was given surgical attention by Bill Jordan, who allowed as how, "When a pizen critter is shore destined to be hung, 'tain't right t' cheat th' gallus an' let him croak natcheral!"

On the way home Whitey, who had commandeered one of the horses of the Cross and Circle, rode up beside Bill Jordan and Mr. Sherwood, followed of course, by Injun.

"Mr. Jordan," began Whitey, "won't you tell us why you let that man Crowley go? I'm mighty glad you did, for he certainly saved my life!"

Jordan smiled: "Mebbe," he said, "that was partly the reason."

"That may have had something to do with it," said Whitey, "but I know there was some other reason, too."

"Well," said Bill, after a pause, "now 't we're here together, I'll tell yo' all. 'Bout five six years ago I was down to Juarez, an' I gits into more kinds o' trouble than Carter 's got pills. I'd bin down into Mexico, an' I was headed back fer God's country, an' I jes' drops

off'n the train t' watch them skates out t' the merry-go-round they calls a 'race-track,' an' mebbe pick up a bet er two. 'Bout the fourth race I cum t' the conclusion I wa'n't no jedge o' hoss-flesh—not them kind o' hosses, anyhow—an' I lays out t' beat it away from there an' get a train. 'Fore I c'd git off'n the track—they must 'a' seen I was a hick—some dip lifted what was left o' the roll, not fergittin' t' incude my watch an' railroad ticket in the deal!" Bill laughed as he thought of it, and the others laughed with him.

"Funny, ain't it?" said Bill, grinning. "But 't wa'n't so funny then! They shore picked me cleaner 'n a col'-storage chicken, an' when I give my jeans a frisk, I found I was exactly fourteen dollars shy o' havin' a nickel! I bet I walked nine mile 'round thet town, thet evenin', an' never seen a friendly face! An' me hungry 'nuff t' eat raw dog; but I never run acrosst no dog—not no four-legged one, anyway, less'n yo' call them hairless kind dogs—the kind thet looks like a rat on stilts. Fin'ly I strays into this here Silver-Dollar Joe's place

—so called on account o' him havin' a bunch of 'em riveted into th' floor an' such. The' was a bald-headed hombrey dealin' faro-bank, an' I stands around watchin' the game, hopin' somebody 'd drop a quarter er somethin'—but nobody done nuthin' like thet—not onto th' floor, 't least. I think I'd of give 'em a battle fer it ef they had! Bimeby the' was a tall guy gits up from the table an' hands out th' most artistic line o' cussin' I'd heard in some time. When a gent kin manhandle language an' discuss his luck like he done, it's a gift! He cum over towards me, an' I reckon I must 'a' looked like a picture o' hard luck, too; an' he says, stopping an' givin' me the once-over, 'Yo' don't look yo' had no rabbit's foot workin' over-time fer yo', neither,' he says.

" 'Correct," I says. "As fur 's luck's concerned, it's a case o' horse-an'-horse—only mebbe mine's a mite worse 'n your'n.'

" 'I kin lick any man thet says his luck is worse 'n mine!' he says.

" 'Commence!' I says, squarin' off.

"He looked me over, an' 'n he says, 'Mebbe we better have somethin' first?' he says.

"'Yo' 're on!' I says, linkin' my arm into his'n so 't he couldn't git away an' change his mind.

"Well, we had one an' then another, him doin' the payin', me havin' declared myself insolvent. We stood leanin' agin' th' bar, me havin' visions that mebbe he'd say somethin' 'bout a san'wich. But seems he had other idees. He fin'ly digs up a ten-dollar gold-piece an' twirls it on the bar careless—an' me meditatin' robbery from the person when I seen it. In a minute I was glad to kep' control o' my yearnin's.

"'This here's the last o' th' Mohigans,' he says. 'It ain't no good t' me,' he says, 'an' mebbe, ef you'd take it an' set into thet game, yo' might make her run. The's them thet says thet two neg'tives makes a affidavit, er somethin', an' combinin' yo'r luck an' mine mebbe 'll start somethin'. Want t' take a chanct?'

"Did I want t' take a chanct! I did so!

Tho' I was some tempted t' buy ten dollars wu'th o' ham an' eggs with th' hull of it.

"Well, I set in, an' my friend went to sleep pronto. Pretty soon luck begin t' cum my way an' I win a bet now an' then. After a spell I had seventy dollars in silver in front o' me, an' my friend woke up. He cum over back o' my chair an' he says, 'How much yo' got?' 'Seventy dollars,' I says. 'Don't make no more bets,' he says, kinder loud, 'thet bald-headed pirate is dealin' seconds an' settin' up splits.'

"Right there's where she started. I managed t' git the money into my jeans before the worst cum, an' the' was considerable fire-works an' breakage took place. I dunno jes' what happened, but I seen my friend wa'n't no slouch an' took quite a hand in th' festivities, an' the' wa'n't much left o' the place when the smoke cleared. I seen my friend make a get-away, an' I follered as soon 's I could. But though I put in all nex' day lookin' fer him to give him his forty dollars, I never saw him agin till to-night!"

Bill rode along in silence for a moment; then

he said, reminiscently, "His name wasn't Crowley, then—somethin' a heap more stylisher! Seems t' me 't was some such name as Smith—er, mebbe, Jones. Whatever 't was, I consider he had mebbe a little more'n forty dollars comin' to him from me—after what he done to me thet night in Juarez."

CHAPTER XXI

INJUN TACKLES CIVILIZATION

The happenings at the Cross and Circle ranch had served to knit closer those bonds which held the white boy and the Indian together. Already fast friends, the trials and dangers that they had been through still further cemented the tie into something more than friendship. Injun received his full share of credit in the affair, for it had been through his wonderful sagacity and his remarkable powers of observation that the various discoveries had been made that led to the tracing of the cattle, the cleaning out of the gang, and the recovery of much valuable property. In fact, it was finally revealed, after a long investigation, that the former owner, Bradley, had been murdered by Ross, or Yancy, and that deeds and

other papers conveying the property had been forged, and thus the rustler had come into possession of a valuable property—far too valuable to have jeopardized it by the nefarious practices in which he engaged. And when the property was finally restored to the rightful heirs, each of the boys was remembered in a substantial way by the Bradley heirs, as will be seen later.

Whitey, too, was not forgotten when it came to apportioning the credit for the clean-up. He, it must be remembered, had first undertaken the investigation on his own hook; he had crawled out of the hay and offered himself for capture that Injun might escape—a thing which required very much more than ordinary nerve and unselfishness. And it was largely on account of his aggressive action that the capture of the band was effected without any bloodshed, except that which flowed from "One-Card" Tucker's arm, and the bruises which Whitey inflicted on the various members of the Ross gang.

When the whole story was fully known, it

is almost needless to say that the two boys were heroes with the men of the Bar O and the other nearby ranches; but they bore their honors modestly, and each made little of the part that he, himself, had played in the affair, and gave credit to the other for having enacted the principal rôle.

The one "fly in the ointment" was the escape of Pedro. Not only did this continue a very grave menace to Injun, for Pedro had sworn to get even with the boy, but it was a keen disappointment to Bill Jordan, who regarded Pedro in about the same light as a mad dog, only the man was far more dangerous and resourceful than any dog could possibly be.

And now, in view of the part that Whitey had played in the wiping out of the gang, both Mr. Sherwood and Bill Jordan felt that the white boy, also, would be added to Pedro's list of those upon whom he proposed to visit his revenge. Pedro was known to be a most persistent and consistent hater, and he had been known to cherish a trifling grievance for years,

and to go a long distance out of his way to avenge some trivial injury, real or fancied.

The entire outfit at the Bar O were, therefore, given strict orders to keep a sharp eye out for the gentleman, and to "get" him on sight, taking no chances whatever on his escape. There was a general feeling that he would not leave the neighborhood until he had, in a measure, repaid those who had been instrumental in balking his schemes, even if it took a long time to do it; and Bill took the boys aside and impressed this upon them.

Altogether, it was a jolly party that rode into the ranch yard a few hours before daylight. As they neared the ranch, Injun, according to his custom, had started to leave the party and go to his own haunts; but Whitey, backed up by his father and Bill, put a veto on this, and so it was finally decided that Injun should spend the night with Whitey at the Bar O ranch.

Injun faced the proposition with some misgivings; he was not accustomed to the usages of civilization, being even more wild than the

members of his own tribe. He preferred the wilderness and the mountains even to the primitive arrangements and comforts of the Indian village, and his initiation into anything so civilized as a modern ranch-house was a wide departure.

When he was ushered into Whitey's room, after a plentiful "breakfast"—both the boys were nearly famished, having had nothing to eat since noon of the day previous—he looked around in positive awe. The room did not exactly resemble a society belle's boudoir, but there were many things in it that meant nothing in Injun's young life.

He was introduced to himself, probably for the first time, by means of a large mirror that surmounted the dresser, and he was greatly surprised and pleased when Whitey showed him that, by tilting it, he could get a full-view of himself as well as a "close-up." It is doubtful if he would have gone to bed at all if Whitey had not insisted, but would have spent the rest of the night seeing himself as others saw him.

The hair brush was also new to Injun;

and after he had been instructed in its use, he spent considerable time arranging his long hair in various ways before the glass. Whitey watched him with a broad grin: "Why don't you do it up in blue ribbons?" he asked, laughing. Injun rejected this suggestion with a grunt and a shake of his head. "Ugh! Red!" he said. He didn't object to the ribbons, but the color! (An Indian likes any color—as long as it's red!)

It took him a long time to decide to take off his clothes, and he balked at the clean, white pyjamas that Whitey offered him. Nothing doing! Fortunately Whitey had a pair of vivid pink pyjamas; and these Injun could not resist. He arrayed himself in them with some difficulty, and surveyed himself in the glass until Whitey threatened to put out the light. And when it came to getting into the bed, he was most dubious. He would have much preferred to lay himself on the floor near the open window and *be comfortable!*

After much persuasion, however, he consigned himself, with much misgiving, to the

soft bed. Injun was accustomed to selecting a spot protected from the winds, first making a fire, if occasion demanded, and then stretching out on the ground or some pine boughs that he collected if they were available.

He could adjust himself to the most cramped and uncomfortable positions and get the repose he needed, even "keeping one eye open," as the saying is, against the dangers that might beset him in the night. However, notwithstanding all the "discomforts" of the civilization that surrounded him, Injun was asleep inside of five minutes, though Whitey lay awake for a long time, the exciting events of the past twenty-four hours running through his mind in vivid review; until, at last everything became a jumble of caverns and Crowleys and Rosses and cattle and scrimmages, all crazy and indistinct, fantastic and illusory, as things always are in the borderland of dreams.

CHAPTER XXII

INJUN SHIES AT PINK PYJAMAS

THE sun was high in the heavens when Whitey awoke. The first sight that met his eyes was Injun, clad in the pink pyjamas, parading up and down before the mirror, and evidently much pleased and impressed with his appearance. Whitey watched him for a time, and then bounded out of bed, and pouring out a basin of water, scrubbed his face and hands vigorously. Injun watched him with some curiosity, but declined to follow his example. The water part of it was all right, but the soap he couldn't understand.

It must not be imagined that Injun was not cleanly; he spent considerable time in the water, but he preferred Nature's bath-tub

rather than a tin, or a crockery one. When Whitey was half-dressed, he was somewhat astonished to notice that Injun had not yet started.

"Hurry up, Injun!" he cried. "Get into your clothes and let's get some breakfast! I'm starved!"

Injun couldn't see it at all! The pink pyjamas looked pretty good to him, and he had decided to adopt them for every-day wear! Whitey almost laughed himself to death. "Why, you can't wear those things around the ranch!" he said, when he got his breath. "Those are only to sleep in!"

Injun didn't feel that way about it at all; he could not understand why such comfortable, loose-fitting and becoming garments were not appropriate for all occasions. And to give emphasis to the fact that he intended to adopt them for business purposes, he proceeded to roll up his shirt and trousers, and put on his moccasins, and tell Whitey that it was *he* who should do the hurrying, as he (Injun) was dressed and ready.

The joke was too good a one to spoil, and so Whitey let it go at that, chuckling to himself at the thought of the sensation Injun would create when he appeared on the ranch.

Both Mr. Sherwood and Bill Jordan were at breakfast when the two boys entered, and the men burst into fits of uncontrollable laughter at the sight of Injun.

"Sufferin' comets!" said Bill, when he could get his breath; "look who's here! Well, if thet ain't a hot sketch, I never seen one!" And Bill again went off into another peal of laughter. Injun was not at all disturbed, but proceeded to take his seat at the table with solemn dignity, and reach out for whatever he saw before him that he felt he would like to eat.

"Ain't yo' got a silk hat, Mr. Sherwood?" asked Bill, as well as he could, between fits of laughing. "Ef this here bird-o'-Paradise jes' had a plug-hat onto him now, he'd be the belle o' the ball fer fair! Ef them boys out t' th' corral ever gits a flash at this here galliwumpus, I couldn't git no work out 'n 'em fer a week! They'd fall down on their face an' die

a-laffin'! An' yet, I ain't got the heart t' deny 'em a peek at it! He's got a peacock lookin' like a dirty deuce in a clean deck, an' 't ain't ever' day the's a ontamed hero wanderin' 'round in pink pants, makin' his debut inta sassiety, an' givin' folks a treat!"

Mr. Sherwood, convulsed as he was, signaled to Bill to let Injun go through with it, and Bill nodded understandingly. He tried to finish his coffee, but another look at Injun caused him to choke and swallow it the wrong way, so he rose hurriedly from the table and made his way out to the corral as well as he could.

In due course Injun and Whitey made their appearance at the corral, and any serious attempt to describe the scene would be idle. If it had been any one but Injun, who had more than ever endeared himself to the boys by his performances of the day before, it is doubtful if they would have ever let up. Injun took it all in good part, being supremely satisfied with himself. Mr. Sherwood, however, voiced this apprehension: "I don't know as we ought to

let the boy wear those things out on the range —how do you think some of the cattle will regard that flaming get-up?"

"Well," said Bill, "outside o' them pore, dumb critters being plumb scairt t' death an' mebbe stampedin', I reckon I wouldn't worry none. Ef yo' was thinkin' 'bout thet Injun kid, from what I've saw of him, I figger he kin take care of hisself in 'bout any fix he's li'ble to git inta. It's them cattle as has a worry comin' to 'em! 'Tain't playin' square t' spring no sech chromatic outrage on them innercent an' do-cile animals an' git 'em all het up with runnin'!" Bill grinned, and then added, after he had thought a moment, "Mebbe it'd sort o' discourage this here aboriginal Aztec from sportin' them sartorial embellishments 'f I was t' git him to lead out thet little black devil of a bull inta the corral. We prob'bly might mebbe see some o' them torreador stunts them Greasers pulls down 't Mexico City! How 'bout it?"

Mr. Sherwood promptly put a veto on this, although there is little doubt that Injun would

have tackled the job, well knowing the danger that it entailed. The black bull was bad enough without anything to irritate him, but being led by an Indian in pink pyjamas was more than any self-respecting bull could be expected to stand.

And so it came about that Injun wore the pink pyjamas until they were reduced to rags and were on the point of falling off of him. The flimsy material was not calculated to stand rough usage, and a few days sufficed. Even then it was only with the utmost difficulty that he was induced to relinquish them. Only the offer by Mr. Sherwood to completely outfit the boy had any effect, and Injun even hesitated about this, because the outfit didn't conform to his idea of a color scheme. However, once the boy got into the new clothes and looked at himself in the mirror, he felt more satisfied.

Bill Jordan looked him over with undisguised approbation in his face; but he made a suggestion. "Injun," he said, as he looked at the boy's long and shaggy head of hair, "yo' ain't aimin' t' be an understudy fer them Ab-

solem er Sampson persons, be yo'? Ain't yo' bin playin' hookey from the barber's fer quite a spell? Looks like the' might be mice in thet there mane o' yo'r'n. Why don't yo' let Pete here operate on them hirsute hairs an' git yo' all manicur'd up proper? I reckon yo' c'd stand it 'thout takin' gas!"

Injun was of an accommodating nature—the kind that will try anything once; and as the process of civilizing him had gone as far as it had, he concluded he might as well go ahead with it; and in a few moments Pete, the ranch barber, was at work on him. Pete was not what is known as "a tonsorial artist"; he was just a plain barber, whose standing as an amateur was unquestioned. His ways were somewhat primitive, if effective, and his equipment consisted of some sheep-shears, a pair of horse-clippers, and a willing disposition; and with this combination, Pete generally managed to get most of the hair off, in spite of the fact that he had no "Union card." He worked rapidly and was careful—frequently his "customers" escaped without the loss of anything more than

their tempers, together with small pieces of hide and an insignificant clipping from an ear, which really amounted to nothing when their otherwise improved appearance was considered.

The "barber-shop" was a space in the ranch-yard, out near the corral, and consisted of a soap-box, on which the victim sat, and the welkin. There was always an "audience," or, rather, spectators, who stood around and made more or less facetious comments; but after witnessing the performance, it took considerable nerve to respond to the call of "Next!"

Injun received sundry digs and clips, but bore them stoically, probably deeming them a regular and usual part of the thing; and it must be admitted that his appearance was decidedly changed—whether for the better or not was a matter of debate, as he stood up for inspection.

"Well," said Bill Jordan, as he looked at the boy in perplexity, "mebbe, Pete, 'f yo' was t' use a ax yo' could git more off'n thet nigh ear'n what yo' done. Howsumever, I reckon

yo' massacreed him sufficient as 't is! D' y' s'pose ef yo' was to take a file yo' c'd mebbe level off some o' them humps?"

Then Walker circled the boy, eying him critically and making pitying noises.

"I thought I seen some fancy hair-cuts in my time," said Walker, "but this here's got 'em all faded! Thet kid's nut looks like it cum through a McCormick harvester! Thet redskin's shore got a fergivin' disposition er he'd run this here Pete person clear to Omaha—an' justifiable, too!"

"'F I was yo', Bill," said Charley Brackett, "after I sent fer th' amb'lance and first-aid an' some court-plaster an' bandages, I'd notufy congress—Indians has some rights!"

"Is that so!" said Pete. "Mebbe you guys thinks yo' c'd do a heap better—yes? I calls thet a pretty fair job—considerin'. Lemme tell yo' thet kid's got hair like wire, an' a pair o' pliers 'd be better 'n shears."

"After looking him over," said Bill, "I reckon yo' must 'a' spoke the truth! 'T's a pity his hide ain't sheet-iron, too."

"Well," said Pete, laughing, "I don't see where yo' all got no call t' criticize—the kid ain't sayin' nuthin'!"

"He can't see hisself!" said Bill; "an' mebbe yo're lucky he can't. Them Injuns is resentful!"

At any rate, Injun survived the ordeal, and in his new outfit, made quite a prepossessing figure, notwithstanding the hair-cut. He was naturally a good-looking boy, and possessed qualities of mind and character that merited attention and development; and Mr. Sherwood determined that, if it were possible, he would, one day, see that Injun had some of the advantages that white boys enjoy.

Not the least of Whitey's enjoyments was getting letters from the boys back East—scarcely a week passed that Bobby and George and Tom did not collaborate in a letter with plenty of news about baseball and the other things that Whitey used to be interested in. I say "used to be"—he really was yet, but in a secondary way. So engrossing did he find life on the ranch, that he had, in a measure, put

many of those things behind him. He found that riding a horse and throwing a lariat and fishing and hunting were fully as interesting as watching The Giants and The Cubs, or trying to curve a ball away from the plate and fool the batter. He had a feeling—and in a sense, he was right—that the former were *men's* doings, and that he was fitting himself to be a man among these men about him.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHITEY HIS OWN BOSS

As the days went by Whitey found that he had "increased in wisdom and stature" to a considerable degree. Although he had been the strongest boy at school, he knew that, after two months or so on the ranch, he had not only gained remarkably in strength, but in agility and suppleness the gain had been proportionately much greater. He had developed muscles that he did not know he possessed, and his almost continuous life in the open air had strengthened his lungs, and had hardened and toughened him. He did not know what "a cold" meant, now; or, in fact, illness of any kind; and he was impervious to any sort of weather that had, as yet, presented itself. In short, he fitted into ranch life like "a duck's

foot in the mud," as Bill Jordan expressed it.

"Do you think, Son, you could manage to get along without me here for a time?" asked Mr. Sherwood, as he and Jordan and the two boys sat on the piazza at sunset, one evening.

"Sure, I could get along," said Whitey, "but where are you going?"

"I find my affairs in the East need some attention and I must go back, at least for a time. Do you want to go back with me?"

"I do not!" said Whitey, emphatically. "I think I won't ever want to go East again!" Bill Jordan smiled behind his hand.

"How about seeing your mother and sisters and the boys?" asked Mr. Sherwood.

"I want to see them, all right; but what is the matter with bringing them out here? You said you would, if you found things here were fit for them, and it seems to me that they are fit for anybody! I don't see why any one should ask for anything better than this!"

"I might bring your mother and sisters, but I don't exactly see how I could bring your boy friends," answered his father.

"I don't see why," said Whitey. "They'd all like it just as much as I do. Don't you think their fathers would let them come?"

"Perhaps, but there are other things to be considered," said Mr. Sherwood. "However, we'll see about it. But before I go, I want to be assured of one thing, and that is, you two boys must promise to keep out of mischief. Bill has enough to do without having to go and rescue you from a peck of trouble."

"That doesn't mean that we have to stay cooped up on the ranch all the time, does it?" asked Whitey ruefully.

"Considering that the ranch contains something like sixty square miles, that ought not to be a hardship, and I wouldn't exactly call it being 'cooped up'; but if you find that you have to go off it, go ahead—only don't get mixed up with any more rustlers and caverns; and remember, too, that our old friend Mr. Pedro is still at large. He'll skin the pair of you alive if he gets the chance."

"I don't know whether he would or not," said Whitey. "I think that in a fair fight,

Injun and I could give him about all he wanted to do, and then some!"

"That's jest the trouble, Son," said Bill Jordan, "thet skunk don't know nuthin' 'bout fightin' fair. He'd sneak up an' bite a baby while it was asleep ef he could! Ef either o' you two gets yo'r lamps onto his pizen carcass, yo' both better empty yo'r Winchesters inta him an' then ride away fer dear life. Thet's th' only way to do 'ith him!"

"Injun hasn't any Winchester," said Whitey, who thought he saw an opening whereby his pal might get one—and he was right.

"Better see if you can't find one, Bill, and let the boy have it," said Mr. Sherwood. "I think he has shown that he can be trusted with anything in the way of equipment that any ranch-hand uses. He is entitled to about anything that I can give him, for he has rendered both Whitey and me most valuable service, and I want to show him that I appreciate it."

"I think thet's good jedgment, Mr. Sherwood. Them two boys is a whole team an' a dog under the wagon, to boot, but the' 's a heap

safer with two guns 'n the' is with one—now 't they knows how to handle 'em."

And so Injun got his Winchester, one from the rack at the ranch-house and, if possible, he was more elated over its possession than he had been over the pink pyjamas. With his naturally keen eye, developed as it had been by continual use of the bow and arrow, he soon became fairly expert in its use, an almost unlimited supply of cartridges which Bill allowed the two boys contributing to this end.

When Mr. Sherwood left for the station to take the train East, the two boys on their horses accompanied the wagon as outriders. The long ride of twenty-two miles was soon made, and at last the East-bound limited came puffing into the station, Mr. Sherwood's baggage was lifted aboard.

"Sure you don't want to go along?" asked Mr. Sherwood of Whitey, as he stood on the observation-platform of the rear car.

"Certain!" answered Whitey. "I am hungry to see the folks and the boys, but I can wait until they come out here!"

"I'll have 'em both ridin' herd by the time yo' gets back!" said Bill as he looked at them proudly. "Thet is," he added, grinning, "unless this here son o' yo'r'n has got me workin' fer him, an' him in my job!"

"Not much danger of that!" said Whitey. "I guess it'll be some time before I can do the stunts that you seem to think are so easy."

Finally, after the good-bys had all been said, the train pulled out, and Mr. Sherwood waved at them from the back platform until they could no longer distinguish him, and the train dwindled to a speck in the distance finally disappearing altogether. And Whitey felt a thrill—the thrill that any strong, self-reliant boy feels when he realizes that he is, to all intents and purposes, his own master.

"Mr. Jordan," said Whitey, one morning, as he met the latter out at the corral, "is it all right for Injun and me to go over to Moose Lake and camp for a few days? He knows where he can get a canoe there, and he says the fishing is fine."

Bill thought the matter over for a moment and then said, smiling,

"I a heap ruther yo' 'd bring the lake over here, where I c'd keep my eye onto you'! Besides, I don't reckon I'd git dispepsy eatin' the fish thet yo' all 'd bring back—Moose Lake's more 'n sixty mile from here! Why don't yo' all go set on the bank o' one o' the branches an' try yo'r luck?"

"I've tried that," grinned Whitey, "and either there aren't any fish worth speaking about, or else they're educated and too foxy to bite."

"Mebbe yo'r worm wasn't tryin' his best," said Bill, solemnly. "The's certain kinds o' worms thet jes' nacher'ly flirts with a fish—sort o' coaxes 'em to cum up an'——"

"Yes, I know all about that," laughed Whitey, "but we haven't time to send our worms to school to teach 'em to flirt. Besides flirting isn't proper, even for a worm. The main thing is—may I go?"

"Well, Son," said Bill, "I reckon yo're yo'r own boss now, ain't yo'?"

"Not entirely," said Whitey. "I'm willing to listen to your advice, anyway."

"Good!" said Bill. "Then I guess yo' don't need none. It's them thet won't take it thet really needs advice. 'Bout how many days yo' call 'a few'?"

"Four or five," said Whitey. "I think that would be long enough."

"Goin' to take a pack-hoss with grub an' stuff—mebbe them Moose Lake fish is eddicated, too? A growin' boy's liable t' git up condider'ble appetite ef he has t' go 'thout eatin' fer four five days! Ef yo' say so, I'll pack up a tin o' biscuit an' mebbe a can o' beans, in case yo' all gits tired of a fish diet."

"That will be fine," said Whitey, "tho', maybe, you better make it two cans of each," he added, laughing. "You know I have quite an appetite at any time—I don't have to fast for four or five days to get one up!"

"So I've noticed," said Bill. "An' now thet yo' 'lowed as how yo' 'd take advice, I'm goin' to hand out some. Don' yo' two get separated too fur in thet there wilderness, an' don't go

messin' 'round with no grizzlies er painters—the's both bad animals! I don't reckon yo'll see none, fer the's pretty well cleaned out; but, ef yo' see a grizzly, an' he don't see you, jes' nacherly put all the distance between you an' him thet yo' kin. An' ef he does see yo', jes' drop whatever yo're doin' an' climb a tree—don't waste no time a tall; an don't come down fer an hour after he's left; they ain't always gone when they *seem* to be! As fur 's other things go, Injun knows 'nuff to pilot yo' through all right."

"I'll remember," said Whitey, "and I'll promise you that I won't take any unnecessary chances."

"Good," said Bill. "I'll have thet packhoss ready with them two cans o' beans onto him whenever yo're ready to start. An' say, listen—don't fergit to bring home somethin'!"

Whitey promised that he would, and turned away to tell the good news to Injun, who had just ridden into the ranch-yard.

The boys decided that they would start as soon as the necessary preparations could be

made, and camp on the way for the night. This would bring them to Moose Lake late in the afternoon of the following day; and within an hour after his talk with Bill the boys rode out of the ranch-yard, their Winchesters slung across their shoulders, and leading a pack-horse that was piled high with what Bill called "a tin o' biscuit an' a coupla cans o' beans," and were headed toward the mountains that looked so near, and yet didn't seem to get any nearer as the boys put mile after mile behind them.

CHAPTER XXIV

MOOSE LAKE

Nothing of any importance happened on the ride during the afternoon, and the boys determined to get as far as possible that day so as to arrive at the lake while it would be daylight on the day following. The darkness had settled down before they pitched camp near one of the numerous branches in a hollow that sheltered them from the wind. The work of building a fire was attended to by Injun, while Whitey opened the pack that contained the "biscuit and beans." It was not long before they sat by the glowing fire and watched the tempting slices of bacon as they frizzled in the pan, and sniffed the fragrant coffee. After a hearty supper the boys lost little time in rolling themselves in their blankets, and were soon in the land of dreams.

It is doubtful if a man ever sleeps so well, or if sleep ever does him so much good as when he takes it out in the open and upon the ground. He seems to imbibe or absorb some of the life-giving elements in that way, which refresh and restore the tissues far more than a sleep in any other bed would.

The two boys were awake, had breakfasted, and were on their way, almost at sun-up the following morning. As the day advanced, the gradual rise in the ground became more perceptible, and the mountains began to come nearer. The trees and shrubs became thicker and the ground more rocky and uneven; and long before dusk began to settle down they found themselves on the shores of Moose Lake, and well into the foothills of the Rockies.

Moose Lake was a considerable body of water, being perhaps nine or ten miles in length, though its greatest breadth was not more than a mile and a half. Its shores were rocky and heavily wooded; in some places they rose high and precipitous from the water's edge, while at other points they sloped gradu-

ally down in sandy beaches. The water was clear and very cold and in many places the bottom was visible at a depth of twenty feet or more.

Injun led the way around the southern end of the lake and toward the West, for a couple of miles, though the horses found the going very rough and they were obliged to pick their way carefully among the stones that lay in masses upon the steep slope of the mountain. After a time a small glade lay before them, and at one end of it was a cabin that evidently was deserted, but in sufficiently good condition to allow it to be inhabited, and to furnish some protection against the weather and wild animals. Here the boys proceeded to establish themselves, and after unpacking their belongings, they bestowed them in proper and convenient places about the cabin.

At the sides of the cabin were two sleeping-bunks—little else than narrow shelves; but the boys, taking their hatchets, went out into the thick growth of pine, and soon returned with armfuls of fragrant boughs which they placed

in the bunks to a depth of two feet, and made them comfortable. Soon a fire was blazing on the primitive stone hearth, and the water boiling in the camp-kettle suspended above it. The horses were tethered so that they might graze freely, and everything made ship-shape for the night, though there was an hour or more of daylight remaining.

"There!" said Whitey, with a look of satisfaction, "this may not be quite so up-to-date as the ranch-house, but I'd rather be here than there."

Injun nodded and grinned his assent to this, but by the way he kept moving, showed that he was not yet through.

"Him get fish plenty supper," he said, as he got out some of the tackle that Whitey had brought. Whitey needed no urging, and fitted his jointed rod together and got out his book of flies. These Injun regarded curiously; he had no intention of fishing himself—that wasn't the way he fished—but he wanted to see how the thing worked.

At the lake, the boys went along the edge,

Injun showing the way until, evidently locating a mark, he stopped and scrambled down to some rocks that were over-grown with brush. Making his way into this, he lifted out a canoe and two paddles, much to the delight of Whitey; and a moment after, under the skillful strokes of Injun's paddle, they were gliding over the glassy bosom of the waters, with scarcely a sound or a ripple.

Whitey, sitting in the bow of the canoe, put a leader and fly on his line and made ready to cast; but Injun shook his head. He steered softly near to where a huge tree bent over the lake, and stopped the canoe, and Whitey cast the line so that the fly struck the water some thirty feet away.

Almost at the instant that the fly hit the water, it was snatched under, and Whitey felt a tug at his line and started to play the fish. He had learned something of the art when he had been in the Adirondacks with his father, but he was not quite prepared for any such fight as this fish put up. It darted this way and that, at times leaping out of the water

and shaking the hook like a dog shakes a rat. But finally, all his fight availed the fish nothing; for he lay in the bottom of the canoe, still making a few weak flops, but conquered. Injun took a piece of string, and tying a stick to one end, he ran the other through the gills of the fish and let him trail in the water in the wake of the canoe.

This whole performance was repeated many times, and although it was not always successful, two or three of the fish managing to get away, when Injun turned the bow of the canoe back toward the cabin, they had enough lake-trout to satisfy the most voracious appetite. Injun stowed away the canoe in its hiding-place, and both the boys threw off their clothes and plunged into the water to wash.

Injun cleaned the fish, and rolling them in some corn-meal that Bill Jordan had placed in the kit for just this purpose, they were soon frying over the fire.

"Delmonico's chef has nothing on you, Injun," said Whitey, as well as he could with his mouth full of trout; "you can't get fish like this

in any hotel that I ever was in! It was worth coming sixty miles to get them!"

Injun didn't know who or what "Delmonico's chef" was, but he knew that Whitey intended to be complimentary, and grinning, let it go at that.

For a long time, after supper, the two boys sat before the fire in the cabin, listening to the night sounds and planning what they would do on the morrow. But, at last, Whitey began to yawn—nobody thinks of keeping late hours when camping in the mountains—and after the door had been barred, the boys tumbled into their beds of pine boughs and were asleep in less time than it takes to tell it, lulled by the occasional hoot of an owl or the far-away voice of a lonesome coyote.

Injun was awakened in the night by a sniffing at the door, and he heard a slight commotion among the horses. He reached for his Winchester and softly opened the door to reconnoiter. But whatever the animal was, he had made off; probably not liking the human scent; and though the red boy kept vigil for a

time, nothing occurred to disturb the quiet again, and he went back to his bed of pine boughs. Whitey slept through it all; so soundly, in fact, that a regiment of soldiers might have marched across the floor and he would not have wakened.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ISLAND IN MOOSE LAKE

The fact that their evening meal had consisted largely of trout did not deter the boys from having the same kind of a breakfast, especially as the "breakfast" was even then swimming in the lake and just asking to be caught and eaten.

So, after a dip in the cool water, Injun again took the canoe from its hiding-place and sent it out into the lake in the light of the early morning. In a few moments, Whitey had a fine string of trout trailing from the boat, and decided that one more would be sufficient. The "one more," however, proved to be a Tartar, and such was the fight that he put up that, in the excitement, the canoe was over-turned and both boys were dumped into

the water. This made no particular difference to them, and they were inclined to regard the matter as a joke, until suddenly Injun said, "Where him rifle?" Whitey remembered that the rifle had been in the canoe, and must now be posing at the bottom of the lake! Indeed, so clear was the water, that it could be seen resting on the bottom, some twenty-five feet below.

"That's a pretty good dive," said Whitey, "more than twenty feet, I should say, though it looks much less. Do you think we can make it?"

Injun's answer was to duck under the water and force himself down with powerful strokes; but although he went down a long way, he could not come within many feet of it. Every motion that he made could be clearly seen, and Whitey watched him with considerable anxiety. At last he was forced to return to the surface. Then Whitey went down, but he fared no better; and after two or three more attempts, the boys came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to recover the rifle in that way.

"I have a scheme!" said Whitey. "We'll mark the spot carefully, then swim ashore with the boat, right it and come back and fish for it with a hook and line."

This sounded all right in theory, but although they "fished" for more than half an hour, they did nothing more than move the rifle, as it seemed impossible to get it hooked securely. It looked pretty dubious, and the boys relaxed their efforts for a time and sat in the canoe thinking.

"I've read somewhere of a trick the pearl-divers have," said Whitey, and it is at least worth trying. Paddle back to the shore, Injun."

Injun sent the canoe to the rocky shore with a few strokes of his paddle, and Whitey landed. He selected a large, heavy stone and placed it in the canoe, and Injun paddled back over the gun. Whitey let himself over the side of the canoe and Injun handed him the stone. Whitey took a long breath, and holding the stone in his arms, went straight down to the gun. Seizing it, he let go his hold of the stone,

and rose rapidly to the top, but heard a terrific ringing in his ears, and his heart beating like a trip-hammer. His chest seemed caving in and he was completely exhausted and hardly able to hang onto the canoe. Injun took the rifle, and paddled back to the shore; and for several minutes, Whitey lay upon the bank until he had recovered his breath. Injun saw that he was coming around all right, and then he carefully wiped and cleaned the rifle.

"Pearl-diving may be all right, for those that like it; but I never saw a pearl I'd go down that far after!" said Whitey, as he rose to his feet, a little unsteady at first, and made his way to the cabin.

Injun cooked the breakfast, and Whitey was as good as ever, under the influence of trout, bacon, and coffee, and eager to carry out the plans they had made for the day.

There was a large island at the other end of the lake that Injun said abounded in berries and various water-fowl; and as either of these would make a welcome addition to the menu,

besides gratifying a taste for exploration, the boys determined to visit it.

Whitey tried his hand at paddling; and, under Injun's tutelage, he quickly got "the hang of it"—at least, so that he could keep the canoe in a fairly straight line. But to be able to send it swiftly through the water without a sound and scarcely a ripple, requires long practice.

After paddling for a couple of miles, it was evident, however, that it would take about all day for them to arrive at the island, if Whitey continued to furnish the motive power, and laughingly suggested that he was perfectly willing to let Injun do the paddling and suggested that they change seats. He rose in the canoe to effect this, but Injun vetoed this emphatically. He reached for the paddle, which Whitey handed to him, and Injun simply turned the canoe around, and thus sat in the stern, the canoe being shaped similarly at both ends. Whitey smiled: "There are more ways than one of skinning a cat!" he remarked, chagrined at having failed to notice such a simple and evident thing.

"I guess, Injun," he said, "I'm a good deal like the man who cut two holes in the barn door—a big one for the big cat, and a little one for the little cat! He and I would make a good team of managers!"

Under the powerful and skillful strokes of Injun's paddle—Whitey took the other paddle and tried to help, but finally put it away as he felt that he wasn't of a great deal of assistance —the canoe soon scraped on the gravelly beach of the island. Injun lifted the canoe out of the water and placed it high and dry on the bank; and, taking their rifles, the boys struck out into the dense woods that covered the island.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MAN ON THE ISLAND

All that Injun had said or intimated about the island was more than justified by the actuality. It rose to a peak at the center, but was filled with gorges and small canyons, and there were two or three little streams that splashed and rippled their way down to the lake. There were no trails, and had Whitey been alone, he would have found great difficulty in retracing his steps to the point where they had landed, except by making his way to the lake and following the edge until he came to the spot.

For several hours they rambled over the island, ate their fill of the luscious wild blueberries that grew in profusion, but failed to bring down any of the wild ducks that swam about the bays and inlets, although they fired at them several times.

As they skirted the northern end of the island, high up on the rocky and precipitous bank, they came upon a cabin. Whitey was for advancing at once and investigating it, but Injun held him back—it was part of Injun's policy never to rush blindly into a strange situation, and never to take anything for granted. From the thick underbrush that concealed them, Injun examined the place carefully for at least five minutes before he ventured to come cautiously out of cover and approach the cabin. Even then, he advanced with great caution and without making a sound.

It may seem that in exercising such extreme caution, Injun was, perhaps, over-doing it; but as a matter of fact, the boy was right. It will be remembered that he was a wild thing, and brought up in the wilds, where a good deal depends upon caution and vigilance. It is the way of wild animals, except possibly those which fear nothing, or those that are notably stupid, to ponder a strange situation very carefully before rushing into it.

Many of them will assure themselves of a

way to get out as well as to get in; and if the matter is at all mysterious and not understandable, will avoid it altogether unless driven by extreme hunger. Wild men and wild animals are suspicious of everything—a strange noise, a strange scent, or a strange circumstance, in the wilderness calls for investigation. Frequently, this extreme caution is the price of life, either to man or to beast, and both know this and proceed accordingly.

A very slight thing had aroused Injun's suspicion. Whitey had not noticed it, at all. Before the door of the cabin were two or three small, freshly-cut chips. Freshly-cut chips indicated recent human presence beyond any doubt. It would be better to know who the human was and whether he was at home before making their own presence known. The island was not a place for tourists, being far off the track that such people usually take; nor was the person, whoever he might turn out to be, a permanent resident. Injun had been over the island many times in the past spring and for two or three years before, and was thor-

oughly familiar with it; in fact, he had occupied the cabin on the occasion of his last visit. He remembered exactly how he had left the place, and could see, very plainly, that some one had succeeded him. He remembered that he had left the door open, but it was now closed —animals or winds seldom *close* doors, especially doors that are hung on leather hinges and have to be pushed along the floor.

Injun circled the cabin, leaving Whitey still concealed in the underbrush. At one point, Injun saw that fire-wood had been recently gathered and there were foot-prints in the damp earth made by high-heeled boots. This was proof positive—if any further proof was needed than that which Injun already had. He glided noiselessly to the wall of the cabin at the rear, and peeked through the chinks in the wall. He could see that there was no one in the cabin, and he came around to the side where Whitey was. He called to him, and both boys entered.

There had been a fire upon the hearth a few hours before, and the sleeping bunk was filled

with fir boughs. Nothing in the cabin indicated the identity of the occupant, however, and he seemed to have no extra clothes or the usual conveniences that a camper would be likely to bring.

"What's all this about?" asked Whitey, smiling rather tolerantly. "I don't see anything so mysterious in finding that a man has been here. Why shouldn't anybody come that wants to? We don't own the island!"

Injun shrugged his shoulders, and kept his own counsel; but it was very plain that he was not satisfied with things. He didn't like being on the island with a strange man, and not know who the man was. He was "from Missouri," so to speak.

They left the cabin, Injun being careful to disturb nothing, and to close the door; and took pains to leave no mark of their visit.

The boys skirted the western side of the island on their way back, and Injun set a rather fast pace. He was careful, too, to move with as little noise as possible and to avoid leaving more of a trail than was necessary. Those

things are simply second-nature to an Indian when he is in any doubt about his environment.

At length, the boys arrived at the lake at the point where they had left the canoe. They made their way cautiously through the thick brush, but as they reached the water's edge, they could see that the canoe was gone! A hurried but thorough search, failed to reveal it. The boys were alone on the island, with a man who, perhaps, was not their friend!

"Well, what do you know about that?" said Whitey, in dismay. "It must be the man who lives in the cabin who has taken our canoe!"

CHAPTER XXVII

A DANGEROUS SITUATION

It was a little more than half a mile to the mainland, although the boys had left their horses at the camp some distance further up the shore, and twilight was closing in fast, leaving little time for deliberation. Whitey put it up to Injun: "What shall we do—stay here or swim for it? It seems to me we better go back to the cabin at the other end of the lake and make this fellow give up what he has taken," said Whitey, tentatively.

Injun shook his head. "Him gone," he said, positively. "Him cow-puncher," he added, pointing to the heel-marks on the beach. The marks had undoubtedly been made by boots such as cow-men wear; no woodsman would ever think of wearing such things in the forest.

"Well," said Whitey, "I guess that means

we got to swim! I'm with you whatever you decide." This would have been a most difficult and hazardous undertaking, encumbered as they were by rifles and clothes, and handicapped by the darkness.

Motioning Whitey to follow him, Injun started along the water's edge and collected several small logs, most of them half rotted and stripped of their branches, and which, by their combined strength the two boys were able to move. Then Injun went back into the woods and returned with an armful of tough, pliant vines and bound the logs together in the form of a rude raft. It was no easy job, and by the time the raft was completed, it was pitch dark.

"Not much of a boat," said Whitey, "but it beats swimming in the cold water all hollow!"

A couple of sticks, to which Injun bound some leafy branches, served as paddles, and the boys prepared to start.

One trial sufficed to demonstrate that the raft would not carry both boys, and Injun quickly divested himself of his clothes and

rolled them into a bundle and handed them together with his rifle to Whitey, who was having his own troubles trying to keep afloat.

"Here," said Whitey, "I don't know why you should do all the hard work! Maybe we both better swim back of the raft and put our clothes and rifles on it?"

Injun shook his head, and gently pushed the raft with Whitey on it into deeper water. Whitey found some difficulty in using the paddle, as the slightest tip sent the logs awash; but after a few moments, he got the hang of it, and progress became easier, though by no means very rapid.

"Say, Injun," said Whitey, after they had proceeded for some distance, "you're headed in the wrong direction! We left the horses up that way—toward the end of the lake. You're going to land way below."

Injun nodded, as though he knew what he was doing, and made no change in his course. This he laid by the silhouette of the trees on the mainland, as the night was almost pitch dark, and only the faint lighter tint of the sky was

visible above the line of their tops. The ever-cautious Injun seldom believed in going straight to his objective, but preferred to come to it in a somewhat roundabout way, and therefore, an unexpected way. If the enemy expects that you will approach him from the south, and you actually come from the north, you have just that much advantage. It is he who will be surprised, not you.

Suddenly Injun stopped swimming and listened; but before he could give a warning signal, a dark object ranged alongside of the raft, and a light from a quickly uncovered lantern flashed in Whitey's face, and the boy looked down the muzzle of a Colt forty-five less than six feet away.

"Poot up ze han's!" said a menacing voice, and Whitey complied without any objection, though in doing so, the raft tilted alarmingly and the water swept over it, first this way and then the other; and that discomfiture might be complete, both the rifles and Injun's clothes slid from the raft and settled into the depths below! Fortunately, the clothes and the two

rifles were at one side and a little behind Whitey on the raft, and not in the range of Pedro's vision. If he had seen them he would have known that he had to deal with two boys instead of one. But Pedro did see the raft tilt, and he realized that Whitey was helpless.

A mocking laugh came from the canoe, and the voice continued: "Ah, zis ees too much lucky! Again I meet my yo'ng frien' what geeve me such keeck in ze belly an' rap on my haid wiz steek at ze Croix an' Cercl'! I haf' not forget—no, no! How yo' lik' tak' nize bath wiz ze feesh in lak'? Huh?" Straining his eyes and peering into the darkness back of the lantern, Whitey saw the grinning face of Pedro.

Whitey did some rapid thinking. It was evident that Pedro believed him to be alone, as the latter kept his eyes on him and did not seek to find his companion. Pedro had evidently found the canoe where Injun had drawn it up on the bank and for some reason had gone back to his cabin before starting for the mainland. The southern end of the lake was some-

what bare of tall timber, and it was probable that Pedro's attention had been attracted by the splashing of Whitey's improvised paddle, and had been able to make out his figure against the lighter background of the sky. At any rate, no matter how Pedro had discovered the raft, the fact remained that he *had* discovered it, and now had both boys in a most precarious situation.

Whitey's only hope lay in the probable overlooking of Injun, and he felt that this circumstance might, in some way, turn the tables in their favor, provided Pedro did not make an end of him immediately. There was no doubt in Whitey's mind that Pedro meant, eventually to kill him, but seemed to be in no hurry, preferring to taunt the boy and to gloat over his apprehension, and thus make his revenge as frightful as possible. He calculated his chances of throwing himself from the raft, but knew that Pedro would fire before he could possibly accomplish this. Nor could he make a jump at the menacing muzzle of the revolver, for the

raft afforded a most unstable and slippery take-off for a leap of any kind.

All these things ran through Whitey's mind with lightning rapidity, and the boy came to the determination that the best thing he could do, under all the circumstances, was to sit still and await developments. He dared not look around for Injun, feeling that it might indicate to the desperado the presence of a third party; and this would be fatal; for Pedro would immediately finish him to reduce the odds against him. He also felt that any parley might either throw Pedro off his guard and give Injun time to act.

"Hello, Pedro!" said Whitey, summoning all his self-control, and grinning pleasantly; "I don't think I need any bath to-night, with the fish! I had one this morning!"

"Yo' go 'n haf' nize, long bath, jes' ze sam'! Yo' go'n' mak' nize dinner fo' ze feeshes—whan Pedro get fro' wiz yo'! Yo' haf' planty fun wiz Pedro, one time! Now Pedro's turn haf' planty fun wiz yo'! Feeshes haf' planty fun, too! Yes! Yo' fodder come hunt an'

don't nevaire fin' yo' someplace nowhere! Zen mebbe Pedro get heem, too! Mebbe Mistaire Beeg Beel Jordan—Pedro get heem, too! By gar! An' yo' nize, leetle frien' Injun-boy—Pedro cut heem een leetle pieces—mebbe cook heem an' roas' heem by fire! How yo' lik', huh?"

"What'll they all be doing when you are pulling this off?" asked Whitey, grinning, in respite of his desperate situation.

"Nev' min'—zey do sam' lik' yo' go'n' do! Yo' lik' say yo' prayer? Le's hear yo' say yo' prayer, 'fore yo' go down see feeshes!" taunted Pedro. "Mebbe yo' lik' sen' som' message far'well to yo' fodder?"

Whitey made no answer, but he kept up considerable thinking. There did not seem to be any opportunity for him to make a move with the slightest chance of success, and the horror of the thing was beginning to get on his nerves. Whitey was a very brave boy, but it would try any one's courage to face this sort of a situation. Pedro saw that his taunts and frightful

threats were having some effect, and he started to apply himself to the torture with glee.

"Ah Haaah!" he gloated, with a savage leer. "Mebbe yo' lik'——"

Whatever it was that Pedro thought Whitey would like will never be known, for a most surprising thing happened; probably more surprising to Mr. Pedro than even to Whitey. His canoe gave a sudden and violent turn, and Pedro, who was crouched in the bow in a half standing position, holding the lantern in front of him with one hand, and the revolver in the other, was pitched head-over-heels into the water, but not before the pistol had been discharged. The bullet went wide, and probably the firing of the revolver was involuntary and caused by the sudden upsetting of the man when he had his finger on the trigger.

"Good old Injun!" yelled Whitey, exultantly, and he leaped from the raft at the spot where Pedro had gone down.

The keen sense of hearing that Injun possessed had warned him of the approach of the canoe in the darkness, but before he had a

chance to warn Whitey or to take any measures himself, the canoe was upon them; and Injun loosed his hold of the raft and sank silently beneath the surface of the water and swam a short distance away before coming to the top toward the stern of the canoe. He kept his eyes and ears above the surface by treading water, and heard the conversation; and aided by the fact that Pedro prolonged it for the purpose of torturing his victim, he was able to form his plan.

Sinking again below the water, he swam to the left side of the canoe, and at the moment he believed Pedro to be in the most unfavorable position and off his guard, he clutched the side of the canoe and gave it a violent tug. It is not much of a trick to upset a canoe—Whitey always claimed that he had to part his hair in the middle to keep one balanced—and the yank that Injun gave the canoe would have upset a good sized yawl.

Pedro, taken entirely unawares, let go of the lantern and revolver, and both went to the bottom. He was a most indifferent swimmer, and

instead of swimming under water and trying to avoid the two boys, he strove to come to the top as quickly as he could and get rid of a large portion of the lake that he had involuntarily swallowed. But in this he was not altogether successful. The moment he had gone over-board, Injun had gone under after him, and Whitey's leap had landed the boy directly on top of him just as he got his head partially out of the water and before he had time to take a breath, and under he went, spluttering and gasping and in a panic. Against two such swimmers as Injun and Whitey, the man did not have a Chinaman's chance. Injun had him by the legs, and Whitey had his arms about his neck, with a grip on his wind-pipe; and the more he struggled and struck and kicked at the boys, the more exhausted he became and the weaker was his resistance. It is probable that he would have been glad to surrender, but was in no position to say so. And it is doubtful if the boys would have listened to any proposition in regard to an "armistice." They had him, and they knew it! If anybody was going

to furnish a "nize, leetle dinner for ze feeshes," it would be Pedro!

Soon, his struggles grew weaker and weaker, and, finally, relaxed altogether; and it was a pretty thoroughly drowned Pedro that they held up in the water at last.

"See if you can find the canoe and the raft," said Whitey, when he had got his breath. "I'll hold him up while you get them."

"Whaffor?" asked Injun. "You swim, me swim, him swim! Him feed feeshes!"

"Nothing doing!" said Whitey. "This is too good a chance—we'll bring him back to the ranch!"

Whitey was "the boss," as Injun had declared long ago; and Injun swam about in widening circles until he came upon the raft. The canoe had either sunk or had drifted away.

Injun pushed the raft back to where Whitey held the unconscious man up and between them, they managed to slide him onto it, although it was considerable of a job, handicapped as they were by the darkness. But, at last, it was accomplished, and although Pedro was plainly

"all in," Whitey took the precaution of tieing his hands with a belt which the man wore.

The weight of the fellow made the frail raft more unstable and "unseaworthy" than ever, and it required a good deal of management to keep him on it.

"Look out!" said Whitey, as the raft tilted at a dangerous angle, "he's sliding off!" And by a desperate effort, Whitey righted the logs and kept Pedro on it.

"Me should worry!" said Injun, who was becoming educated. In fact, the whole proceeding was entirely foreign to Injun's ideas of how to treat an enemy, and if it had been left to him, he would have tied a rock around Pedro's neck to insure that he went straight down to "Davey Jones' Locker." Injun could not see any reason for taking so much trouble to save the life of a man who would inevitably be hung or lynched. And, for the matter of that, other people than Injun have had the same feeling!

CHAPTER XXVIII

A PENITENT PRISONER

By the time the raft grated on the pebbles of the mainland the moon had begun to show over the horizon, and its light dissipated some of the difficulties that confronted the boys in their undertaking. They rolled Pedro onto the beach with difficulty, and sat down beside him for a moment to rest.

The prisoner began to show some signs of coming to, and Injun was for taking a huge rock and preventing any return to consciousness by banging the man on the head with it. Whitey prevented this, however; but he assured himself that Pedro was securely tied. By means of some tough, but pliable vines that Injun got from the brush near at hand, he not only bound Pedro's hands behind his back, but

hobbled him so that he could take a step of not more than a foot in length. In addition to this, he put a slip-noose about the man's neck with a long leash; and having Pedro thus trussed up, he awaited his returning consciousness with some interest.

The outlaw took several short, gasping breaths, each longer than the other, and at last, his eye-lids trembled and then opened, and he looked at the two boys beside him. It took him a moment to realize his situation. When he did, it was evident that he did not enjoy it, and he looked malevolently at the boys. Injun brandished a huge club that he picked up nearby.

"Had a 'nize, leetle' nap, didn't you, Pedro!" said Whitey, imitating Pedro's taunting tone. "That dinner for 'ze feeshes' had to be postponed, didn't it! Now, maybe you'd like to say a few prayers? How about it?"

Pedro decided upon other tactics: "Pedro jus' play jok' on nize, leetle boys! Pedro not hurt nize boys!"

"I know blame well you won't," said Whitey,

"for the simple reason that you can't! You're going to be 'ver' nize' from now on! Nice and gentle! Come on," he said, rising, "you are due for a nice long walk back to the ranch—it's only sixty miles and there's a hearty welcome waiting for you there—your old friend Bill Jordan will be mighty glad to see you!"

Pedro studied Whitey's face with his black, evil eyes. "Sure!" he said, "I go—be ver' nize! Yo' ontie Pedro's foots so he walk!"

"Sure!" said Whitey, "I'm full of those tricks! I'll untie your feet—when we get to the ranch! Get a move on!"

Pedro rose to his feet and started off as well as the hobble would let him, but made rather a poor job of walking over the rough ground in the semi-darkness. He made another appeal to have the hobble removed, but he abandoned any further effort in that direction when Whitey said, "Injun, if he turns around again or makes any bluff at falling down or not being able to walk, you just belt him one over the head with that club and see if it doesn't help him to walk better!"

"Me soak 'em!" said Injun, eagerly, and he gripped the club; he evidently didn't see the use of waiting until Pedro did any of these forbidden things, but was willing to hit him now and let him disobey the rules afterward.

"'T won't do to muss him up too much," protested Whitey. "The boys at the ranch will want to hang a whole man, not a half of one; and if you ever land on him with that club, we'll have to bury him right here!"

Injun indicated that such a proceeding wouldn't be any trouble at all to him, but Whitey said it would take too long as they didn't have a spade! What Pedro thought about it is not recorded.

After a considerable time and in spite of numberless difficulties—Injun, being without any clothes whatever, suffered somewhat from the briars and rough vines and branches—the strange procession arrived at the glade where the horses had been left, and found that the animals were still there. And while it would have done Pedro good to have been compelled to walk back to the Bar O ranch, yet Whitey

figured that it would delay them unnecessarily, and, therefore, he decided to tie the gentleman on the pack-horse. To do this, it would be necessary to untie the hobbles that limited Pedro's leg-action, and the vine was accordingly cut, releasing his legs, while Injun stood over him with the club, ready to "soak 'em" at the first move. Whitey looked at the gleaming bronze skin of Injun and asked, "Aren't you cold, Injun?" Injun disclaimed any such feeling contemptuously.

"I thought," said Whitey, "that as long as we had his legs untied, you might want a pair of pants?"

Injun experienced a startling reversal of form: "Ugh! Injun heap cold!" he said with a tremendous show of shivering. And accordingly the transfer was made, although Pedro put up an awful fuss, which was entirely futile. True, the trousers were not a perfect fit, and they were very wet and soggy; but they were a pair of trousers, and Injun was not particular.

After drawing them on, he proceeded to investigate the pockets, and took therefrom

a very sizable roll of bills and several water-soaked documents. There was not sufficient time or light to investigate the character of the documents, but from the way Pedro took on, they were evidently of some importance. He wheedled and whined and pleaded and then cursed and threatened, but all that only confirmed the boys in their determination to keep the stuff.

Under the persuasion of Injun's club, Pedro was soon seated on the pack-horse, his legs bound very tight beneath the horse's belly and the cavalcade started on their sixty-mile trip.

The moon had risen and shed a full, silver flood over the woods and the prairie, and it was almost as light as day. It is said that moonlight will make almost anything look romantic; but it is hard to believe that Pedro, clad in a wet, bedraggled coat and red flannel underwear, and with a leash around his neck and his hands tied behind his back, could have inspired anything but laughter in anybody. He was "mad clear through" and his language was distinctly not fit for publication—he had

The cavalcade started on its sixty-mile trip

abandoned all efforts to wheedle by this time, having discovered that he was not dealing with children, as he had at one time supposed —and he proceeded to exhaust a very comprehensive vocabulary of profanity in what sounded like six different languages. Whitey stood it for some time, and then he said, "Now look here, Pedro, if you say another word before sunrise, I'm going to put a gag into that foul mouth of your's that'll keep you quiet. I wouldn't let even these horses hear such talk! You told me to say my prayers, and now, I think, under the circumstances, you better follow your own advice!"

And thus admonished, in addition to the fact that Whitey drew the slip-noose a trifle tighter around Pedro's Adam's apple, that gentleman proceeded to subside.

It would be idle to follow the incidents of the long ride to the Bar O ranch—in fact, there was no incident worth noting. Pedro made several efforts to talk himself out of his plight, and once, he tried to get his hands out of the bonds that held them and almost succeeded.

But what good it would have done if he had succeeded, is not plain. The boys had a sharp eye on him at all times, and his legs were firmly bound beneath the horse. Besides, Injun was right on hand and ready with the club, which would have had a very salutary effect on anybody.

CHAPTER XXIX

BRINGING HOME THE CAPTIVE

Late in the afternoon, Bill Jordan and many of the cow-punchers stood near the corral of the Bar O, watching Walker break one of the green horses. Walker was having a more than ordinarily hard time with the animal, which evinced an extraordinary viciousness. No one saw the cavalcade until they were within the confines of the yard.

"Sufferin' Jehosaphat!" said Basset, "will yo' all give a look at what's here?"

In two seconds, Walker and the horse performed without any spectators, and the entire crowd made a rush for the trio. No one recognized Pedro at first, one reason being that he had further misbehaved himself in his use of lurid language, and he had been effectually

gagged, and the effect of the red flannel underwear was somewhat startling.

Injun, too, presented a slightly ultra effect in Pedro's trousers which hung down and completely concealed his feet, and gave him the appearance of a boy with the legs of a very tall man; and the huge club that he brandished threateningly at the dejected looking Pedro added to the picturesqueness of the get-up. The entire party were worn out and travel-stained, and presented a most "shot-to-pieces" aspect. But notwithstanding his condition, Whitey was jubilant.

As they drew near the group of cow-men, Whitey shouted: "You told us to bring back *something,* and I guess we did!"

Bill Jordan drew nearer, eyeing the group intently and convulsed with laughter at their appearance.

"I reckon yo' shore did," said Bill, who was plainly puzzled, "but what is it?"

"I don't believe you need any introduction to the gentleman," said Whitey, "but if you do, I'll present you to him. He didn't want to

come, but Injun and I persuaded him to accept an invitation to spend some time with us. Mr. Jordan and gentlemen of the Bar O, allow me to present Mr. Pedro! He would like to shake hands with you all, but circumstances prevent!"

And with this, Whitey removed the handkerchief that acted as a gag and obscured the lower part of the prisoner's face.

A howl went up from Bill and the ranch men that must have scared the cattle out on the range, and they crowded around the unhappy Pedro to assure themselves that it was really he. Bill Jordan could scarcely believe his eyes; he grabbed the pack-horse by the bridle and turned him around several times, and viewed the dejected Pedro from all angles; then he fixed his eyes on the outlaw and the latter quailed under the glance.

"I shore am plumb devastated with six kinds o' delight to meet yo', Mister! An' I don't doubt none thet th' gen'lemen here'll over-look th' onconventionality o' yo'r makin' yo'r début inta sassiety 'thout th' formality of havin' no pants on to speak of. 'Tain't usual—not in

no drawin' rooms what I frequents, it ain't—but the' 's a 'Welcome' onto the mat o' this here dump fer yo', pants er no pants!"

"What kind of a galliwumpus er ring-tail giasticutus hev' we here?" said Walker, who had "finished" the broncho, and had come to join the group around the boys and Pedro. "Er is it jes' somethin' the cat brought in?"

"Give it another slant an' yo' won't need no interduction," said Bill, as he pushed Walker nearer to the unfortunate Pedro. Walker started as he looked keenly at the man's face.

"Well, I'll be tee-totally jim-swizzled!" shouted Walker. "Dog-gone ef it ain't our ol' frien' Pedro! Why, Pedro, ain't yo' 'shamed to be gallivantin' 'round all ondressed up, like yo' be? But, never mind, Ol' Top! We all is goin' to pervide yo' with a nice wooden overcoat thet'll cover up them red-flannel laigs o' yo'r'n so 't they don't flag the Overland Limited:

"Ain't it a shame we ain't got no camera—an' this here thing settin' on thet hose in front of us! I reck'n Pedro's frien's 'd like a pitcher

of 'im in this here get-up so 's they c'd 'member how he looked jes' 'fore he kicked off!"

"I've got a camera," said Whitey, and running into the ranch-house, he returned with it in a moment.

At the sight of the camera, Walker set up a howl of delight. "Now, Mr. Photografter," he yelled to Whitey, "yo' git th' machine in kerflukus an' I'll pose this flamingo-legged buzzard inta divers an' sundry fascinatin' positions! Yo' jes' p'int that there box at 'im and I'll do the rest!"

"Hol' on!" said Charley Bassett. "Thet there looks t'me like a perfec'ly good camera—ain't yo' takin' an awful chanct, Kid, a-p'intin' 'er at hunk o' dog-meat?"

"I guess the camera 'll stand it, Charley," said Whitey, "though it has never had a severe test like this."

"Shore!" said Walker; "Take a chanct, Kid! When I gits through drapin' him 'round the scenery, I reckon he'll be some picture-squee!" Walker grabbed the bridle of the horse on which Pedro was perched and swung it around

broadside to the camera. "Set up there, yo' owdacious varmint, an' look happy an' take yo 'r medicine! Look happy, I tell you'! 'F yo' don't look happy right pronto, I'll let Injun see 'f he kin bend thet there fence-post he's carryin' over yo'r bean!"

Injun moved up nearer and gripped the "fence-post" entirely ready to carry out his part of the program.

"Mebbe yo' better wait a minute, Injun," said Walker, "till we git the pitcher; 't wont do to sp'ile him altogether—*yet*!" said Walker significantly.

"All set?" asked Walker. "Ef so, shoot!"

Whitey pointed the camera at Pedro and got the proper focus. "Hol' thet pose, yo' spavined coyote!" yelled Walker, at Pedro. "Hol' it, I tell you!' 'F yo' move, an sp'ile this here negative, Injun is gonna bust yo' one! Look right at the box, yo' bashful an' blushin debbytanty! Look at th' box for mamma, an' see th' nice birdie come out!"

Whitey snapped the trigger, and Basset was much relieved to learn that the lens had not

cracked. Under Walker's skilful and gentle posing, two or three more pictures were taken, and then Bill Jordan called a halt.

"I guess thet 's 'bout 'nuff," he said. "The' ain't no use imposin' on a willin' an' good-natured pitcher-machine."

"All right," said Walker, "when does th' festivities start?" he asked of Jordan. "I claims th' honor of furnishin' th' rope!"

"Well," said Jordan, hesitatingly, "ef we all 'd run 'cross this here maverick's trail out in the open, I reckon the festivities 'd 'a' begun an' finished, right there. An' I certainly has regrets an' apologies 'bout denyin' yo' all th' privilege of takin' a active part in the obsequies touchin' on an' appertainin' to th' kickin' off o' this here polluted skunk. But this here community is committed to the statoots o' Law an' Order, in sech case made an' pervided, as The Good Book says; an' I reckon, as long as them boys went out an' hog-tied this here ulcer onto th' decency an' fair name o' the Sovereign State o' Montana, he'll hev' to be tried by a jury o' his peers—jes' like a respectable mur-

derer would—tho' where they're going to git twelve peers o' this here low-down insec', is more'n I kin onderstand! I guess thet part of it's up to the Sher'ff."

"Try him!" shouted Walker, dashing his hat onto the ground, in amazement and rage; "try him! What in blazes does anybody want t' try him fer? Don't ever'body in sixteen states know 't he'd oughta bin hung ever sence he was two year old? Yo' an' yo'r statoots don't ondertake to try no mad dog, do yo'? Yo' don't go out an' collect no twelve peers to set on a jury 'fore 'yo're 'lowed to shoot the pizen head off'n him, do yo'? An' ef this bird ain't worse'n a hull kennel o' mad dogs an' a nest o' rattlers throwed in fer good measure, then I'm plumb locoed an' b'long into a padded cell up to the nut-foundry!"

"I admits all yo' says in regards to th' gen'leman's character—in fac', I may say yo' ain't done justice to him, not in no way, yo' ain't. But thet ain't the p'int—we got t' abide by th' law, no matter what he done, an' personal inclinations don't cut no figger. Ef 't 'd

bin lef' t' me, he 'd 'a' bin 'requiescat in pieces,' a consider'ble spell back. But th' law's th' law, an' I got t' hand him over to th' a-thor'ties, jes' th' same's ef he was a white man. I'm plumb grieved, but I got t' do it! Why didn't yo' bust him over th' bean 'ith thet wand yo' got there, Injun?" asked Bill. "It 'd 'a' saved a lot o' palaverin' an' hard feelin's an' expense to th' caounty!"

"Him say bring 'im in!" said Injun, reproachfully, pointing to Whitey. "Me bust 'im now!" and Injun lifted the ponderous club and was prevented from braining Pedro, missing him by a narrow margin, as Bill Jordan deflected the blow.

"One strike!" said Walker. "Give th' kid a chanct—he's entitled to two more! Go on, Kid, knock him fer a three-bagger!"

"No more o' thet!" said Bill, with as much sternness as he could muster. "I'll take charge o' this dose o' small-pox an' put him on the ice till the Sher'ff gets here. Walker, go call up the Sher'ff's office, an' tell him t' come an' get this here prize-package. Seems t' me,

now't I think of it, the's a reward comin' t' yo' two kids. 'F I remember right, the' was quite some consider'ble sum put onto his head. Seems like he was some valuable to the caounty."

This, indeed, turned out to be true, and within a short time, the sum of two thousand dollars was paid over to the representatives of the boys. Bill Jordan was selected by Injun as his guardian, and Bill accepted the responsibility gladly, but with some misgivings.

"What is yo' purposin' to buy with all this here kale, Mister Ping Pong Morgan?" asked Bill of the boy. "Would yo' ruther hev' a steam yacht er a coupla railroads?"

"Pink pajams!" said Injun, without any hesitation.

"A thousand dollars worth of 'em?" asked Bill.

"Sure!" said Injun.

CHAPTER XXX

PEDRO'S HATRED

"WHAT started the trouble between you and Pedro, Injun?" asked Whitey, as they stood by the corral the next morning. Bill Jordan had just delivered Pedro into the hands of the Sheriff, and the half-breed had given vent to his opinion of Injun in the most lurid language that he had at his command, seeming to blame the boy for all his woes. The tirade had been interrupted by a blow in the mouth delivered by the Sheriff's heavy hand; but Pedro was taken away, cursing Injun volubly, and telling what he would do to him if he ever were able to get his hands on him, and the vehemence of the man left no doubt as to the amount of venom that was in his heart.

Injun grinned in answer to Whitey's ques-

tion. "Him tell," he said, pointing to Bill Jordan. Making a lengthy narrative was not exactly Injun's long suit, and he delegated the job to Bill.

"Well," said the latter, "it came about thisaway. Thet skunk hoboed it in here, one day, 'bout a year an' a half ago—when ol' man Granville was alive—an' he was 'bout the down-an'-outest proposition yo' ever see. He'd bin shot in the shoulder an' the wound hadn't had no attention an' th' cuss was 'bout all in. He didn't hev' no horse ner no gun ner no clothes t' speak of—he didn't hev' nuthin' 'cept hunger an' thirst an' mis'ry. Nobuddy 'd 'a' giv' five cents fer a car-load like him, 'cept fer fertilizer, an' it shore did look like he was playin' hookey from the graveyard with the ondertaker on his trail 'bout two jumps behind him an' gainin' fast. If ever a guy stod 'ith one foot in th' grave an' t'other on a banana-peel Pedro was it.

"Well, sir, ol' man Granville took him in—th' ol' man jes' nacher'ly couldn't see nuthin' suffer—an' started in t' renovate him; an' take

it from me, it was some consider'ble job. He set up nights an' nu'sed thet low-down houn' back to life an' health, an' saw 't he had ever'thing—jus' like a white man 'd oughta. Seems like this here Pedro c'd talk French lingo an' so c'd ol' man Granville. When th' two of 'em was at it, y'd a thought the' was a pack o' fire-crackers goin' off, not t' mention th' activ'ties of their hands, which was consider'ble. 'Pears like a man 't ain't got no arms 'd be consider'ble handicapped expressin' himself lucid.

"Well, 't any rate," Bill went on, "in 'bout two months, Pedro was able to set up an' take a little nourishment while they made his bed, an' I c'd see 't he was a heap sight better 'n he let on t' be. An' him an' th' ol' man 'd set onto th' porch an' play pedro by th' hour. Th' ol' man liked th' game so well he lent Pedro money so 's he c'd win it back—only it didn't turn out thet way, an' Pedro was a steady winner—so much so 't us boys giv' him thet name—'Pedro.' An' I will say 't the cuss was some gifted when it come to turnin' a Jack off'n th' bottom er shiftin' th' cut. I see him pull them stunts one

day when I was watchin' th' game, but I didn't say nuthin' to th' ol' man 'bout it, him bein' free, white, an' over twenty-one an' not relishin' bein' told he were a sucker—not at no time he didn't! He always 'lowed he c'd pertect himself, an' mos' gener'ly he could.

"But while I didn't say nuthin', I thinks to myself 'what kind of a hombrey 's this thet 'll giv' the work to a gent as has did as much fer him as th' ol' man done?' 'Peared t' me thet ef a guy yanked me back out 'n th' grave an' put me on my feet, I would flip no Jack off 'n th' bottom on *him*—not fer no money, I wouldn't! But 't wa'n't none o' my business; besides, mebbe th' ol' man was jes' tryin' him out an' gittin' a line on him.

"An' 'nother thing—ever'body but th' ol' man c'd see thet Pedro was soldierin' on him an' was plenty able to get up an' earn a livin'. But thet wa'n't Pedro's gait—'s long's somebuddy take care o' him, he didn't pear t' worry none 'bout takin' care of himself. An' he'd four-flush round 'bout how sick he felt an' how his shoulder hurt, an' thet whiskey was 'bout

th' onlies' thing 't relieved him. An' he shore licked up a lot o' th' relief! He was Alice-sit-by-th'-firewater, fer fair! Lit up like a Chrismus tree at ten in th' mornin', an' oreide by four in th' afternoon—reg'lar.

"Bimeby, when he did get to goin' 'bout, he got a sudden ambition fer work, an' th' ol' man giv' him a hoss an' outfit an' he rode fence. An' 's far anybuddy c'd see he done pretty good. But after a spell, things begun t' turn up missin'—not big things, but trifles—a little money, now an' then, an' a saddle er two, an' a lariat occasional, an' sech. Pedro managed to throw suspicion at Injun, here, an' we got t' thinkin' thet mebbe th' boy was at the bottom of them petty-larceny goin's on, an' fin'ly, I tells Injun he better keep off 'n th' ranch. Seems this didn't exac'ly tickle Injun t' death—him not bein' no thief—an' he done a little detectivin'. He trails Pedro an' locates his cache an' leads me an' Walker to it an' shows us th' stuff, includin' some things we knowed b'longed to Pedro. How thet bird got wind of it all I dunno, but he did; a right at th' same

time me an' Walker was at the cache, an' most o' th' boys away from th' ranch house, he snuk in a grabbed quite a roll of bills out 'n th' safe 't happened t' be open, an' took a shot at ol' man Granville, nickin' him in th' arm, an' gits away clean! Yes, sir—after all ol' man Granville done fer him!

"A spell afterwards, he meets up 'ith Injun—s'prises him, an' th' kid ain't got a chanct t' git away. He starts in t' hev a little hangin' bee—a necktie-party, like I tol' you' 'bout—but he made th' mistake o' lettin' Injun set onto his own pinto an' he put the noose 'round Injun's neck 'fore he throwed th' other end o' the lariat over th' limb o' th' tree! Th' minute he throwed th' lariat over th' limb, Injun dug his knees inta th' pinto—mind you', Injun's hands was tied behind his back—an' th' pinto knowin' what Injun was thinkin' 'bout, like I said, beats it away from there with th' lariat draggin' on th' ground! O' course, Pedro took after him, but lucky fer Injun, after he'd rode 'bout a mile, he sights me an' Walker ridin' fence, an' Pedro sights us, too. An' he beats it, an' we

never seen him till yo' an' Injun brung him in here t' git his pitcher took."

Whitey took a long breath: "Gee!" he said, "That was a narrow escape!"

"Correct!" said Bill. "An' ef you don't think it was some trick fer thet kid t' set onta thet hoss, his hands tied behind him an' th' lariat draggin', yo' try it sometime!"

Bill put his hand on Injun's shoulder affectionately. "Thet 's what I call ridin' a hoss!" he said.

CHAPTER XXXI

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

If Columbus, or the early Norsemen, or who ever it was that first discovered America, had been satisfied to sail vessels within the confines of the known seas in their immediate neighborhood, the existence of this great continent would have remained unsuspected by the people of the Old World. It is the spirit of adventure, of dissatisfaction with things as they are, that is at the bottom of all great discoveries and of all progress. And although the boys had gained a wide-spread fame on account of their capture of the desperate Pedro, who was even then in jail awaiting the day of his execution, they did not like to rest on their laurels, but, like Alexander, sought for "new worlds to conquer."

After their excursion into the wilds, the life on the ranch, while by no means dull, lacked the zest of adventure and discovery, of which they or, rather, Whitey, at least, had had a taste. Injun had spent all his life in adventure, and while it was nothing new to him, it had become a sort of second nature, and made the limitations of even semi-civilization irksome.

And with this urge going on in Whitey's breast, it was natural that he should inquire of Bill Jordan, as they sat on the piazza one evening, "Mr. Jordan, what kind of a place is it in the mountains, over beyond Moose Lake?"

Bill took his pipe out of his mouth and looked intently at the boys before replying.

"Was yo' calc'latin' on goin' out an' grabbin' off some more rewards an' sech, bringin' in some more hombreys like Pedro? Er mebbe, yo' all 'd be satisfied t' locate a coupla gold mines er somethin'? What was yo' all studyin' 'bout doin'?"

"I don't know as I had a definite plan,"

said Whitey, "I just asked you what kind of a place it was over there."

"Yes, I know—yo' all didn't have no intentions—that's why yo' all wanted to know 'bout the place!" and Bill grinned, tolerantly. Then, after thinking a moment, he said, "As fur's the place goes, I reckon it's some wild an' uncultivated. I ain't bin through it fer some years, but I reckon 't ain't changed none t' speak of. Prospectors give up tryin' there long ago, an' I reckon 'tain't good fer much else—consider'ble amount o' rocks an' scenery —thet's 'bout all.

"I wouldn't mind owning a gold mine," said Whitey. "That is, a good one," he qualified. Bill uncrossed his legs suddenly and puffed rapidly, as he shook all over with inward laughter.

"The's them 's had thet idee before, Son," he said, grinning. "A reel good gold mine's a handy little thing t' hev 'bout the house! I dunno's *I'd* turn one down ef 't was offered t' me!"

"Well," said Whitey, "I guess the only way

to get one is to go out and find it, isn't it? I don't believe anybody is going around offering 'em to people."

"Would yo' know a perfeckly good gold mine 'f yo' was t' meet it comin' 'long the road?" asked Bill. "Hev' yo' got a speakin' acquaintance with gold mines, so 't yo' c'd walk right up to 'em an' bid 'em the time o' day?"

"Well," said Whitey, "gold is gold, isn't it? I've been seeing it all my life—I ought to know it!"

"Well," said Bill, "they don't dig it out 'n the ground in the form o' twenty-dollar gold-pieces er watches an' chains an' rings—not this season, they don't. Lemme show yo' all somethin'," and Bill rose and went into the ranch-house. In a moment, he returned with a dirty reddish looking piece of rock about the size of a hen's egg and handed it to Whitey. "What 'd yo' calc'late thet thing is?" he asked, as he resumed his seat.

Whitey examined it, and Injun looked at it interestedly. "I should say, if we had not been

talking about gold, that it was a piece of iron ore, but now I suppose it's gold."

"Correct!" said Bill, "an' mighty near pure gold, too! Whenever yo' come across a few tons o' stuff jes' like thet, jes' yo' put 'em in yo'r pocket, an' ol' John D. won't hev nuthin' on yo'!"

"Is there any of it over beyond Moose Lake?" asked Whitey.

"Strange to say," said Bill, "thet there chunk come from over thet way. But I guess thet was 'bout all of it the Lord put there, thet is, in the way o' quartz—I reckon 'bout all the streams shows color, but they don't never pay to work 'em."

"Well, don't you think Injun and I——"

"Yes," interrupted Bill. "I do. Ef yo' two galliwumpuses hes made up yo'r minds t' go out an' get yo'rselfs a few gold mines, I ain't th' man t' put the kibosh onto it—*only,* yo' ain't goin' there *alone*—not ef I'm the lawful g'ardeen o' thet there person 'ith the passion fer pink pants, yo' ain't! Yo' all kind o' got me excited 'bout prospectin'—I ain't done none fer

years; but onct it gits a holt onto yo', it ain't easy shook—an' as this here ranch is a good deal of a pianola proposition—plays itself—mebbe I c'd find time to go nosin' 'round with yo' all fer a spell. Air yo' all open fer a pardner?"

Were they open for a partner! They were! Nothing could have delighted the boys more than to have Bill accompany them; and the next few days were spent in preparations. But, unfortunately, things do not always turn out as planned. Plenty of things turned out—but not according to Bill's schedule. All that will be known when Injun and Whitey strike out for themselves.

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